THE GIRARD INTERMEDIATE

GEOGRAPHY

PREPARED BY
J. MCFARLAND

Class 226.7 .S H752 Book
General Theological Seminary Library
CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK

PRESENTED BY
Soc'y for Promoting Religion and Learning

HE HEALED THEM ALL

HE HEALED THEM ALL

MEDITATIONS UPON
OUR LORD'S MIRACLES OF HEALING

By
GEORGINA HOME, M.A.
(*Late of Newnham College, Cambridge*)

Preface by
J. M. HICKSON

ORAL ROBERTS
UNIVERSITY
TULSA, OKLA.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT
ROXBURGHE HOUSE
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:
THE NAZARENE PRESS
MOUNTAIN LAKES, NEW JERSEY

MCMXXIX

1929

226.7 S
H752
86319

Dedicated
to

A. M. R.

WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE

MADE IN ENGLAND

PREFACE

I HAVE much pleasure in writing a few words by way of preface to Miss Home's book.

Miss Home has been for several years in touch with my work, and she is in full sympathy with my views upon the importance of the work of Spiritual Healing in the Church. For three years, whilst I was away from England upon my world-mission, Miss Home conducted a little Intercession Service for the sick in my private chapel at home. It is from the experience thus gained and from addresses then given that she has been able to write the following meditations.

I pray that Our Lord will bless this effort to bring light and inspiration to many who are crying out: "Sirs, we would see Jesus!"

J. M. HICKSON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THOSE who want to learn about Spiritual Healing are told that the best book to consult is the Bible, especially the Gospel accounts of Our Lord's miracles of healing. This book is written to try to help them in their study.

It is also written with the hope of making clear that Spiritual Healing is not for the body alone, but for the whole being—body, soul and spirit. For this reason accounts of such healings as those of St. Thomas and the Penitent Thief have been included.

Spiritual Healing is nothing new. It is as old as Christianity itself, and it bears witness to the fundamental facts of our religion—Our Lord's Ministry upon earth, and His Living Presence in the Church. The belief in the one will be found to lead to the deeper realisation of the other, for "to him that hath shall be given." An incident in the life of St. Macrina, the sister of St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa, illustrates this interaction of belief. The saint had healed a little child of a painful and disfiguring eye-trouble. "She has indeed given her the true drug which cures disease," cried the mother, "it is the healing that comes

from prayer." The father, a soldier, telling the story afterwards to St. Gregory, said that when he saw his child was healed, " I understood the marvels of the Gospel that hitherto had been incredible to me."

On the day on which this Preface is written *The Times* gives a report of the enthronement sermon of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. In it come these words which exactly express what the Healing Presence of Christ in His Church will be if the " everlasting doors " are thrown open to give Him full admittance. " We need now some fresh vision of the Gospel—of the Power, Wisdom, Beauty, Goodness of God ever moving forth in Christ Jesus Our Lord under the impulse of infinite love to enter, redeem and perfect the life of man. If this ceaseless inflow of the Divine Life be fact, it is beyond question, the most wonderful fact in the world, truly a " joyful tidings! "

Those who have seen some of the wonders of Spiritual Healing know that it is part of these joyful tidings. They dimly glimpse some of the wonders that are yet to be revealed through it, and earnestly pray that the Church through the revival of her Ministry of Healing may carry out her original commission to heal the sick, and that a great spiritual revival may follow.

G. H.

"Or is't so, as some green heads say,
That now all miracles must cease?
Though Thou hast promised they should stay
The tokens of the Church, and peace.

No, no; Religion is a spring,
That from some secret, golden mine
Derives her birth, and thence doth bring
Cordials in every drop, and wine.

. . . . .

Heal then these waters, Lord; or bring Thy flock,
Since these are troubled, to the Springing Rock;
Look down, Great Master of the feast; Oh shine,
And turn once more our water into wine."

H. VAUGHAN.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE BLIND MAN OF BETHSAIDA	13
THE PARALYSED MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA	18
ST. PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER	24
THE LEPER	31
THE PARALYTIC BORNE OF FOUR	37
THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND	45
THE CENTURION'S SERVANT	51
THE DEMONIAC OF GADARA	57
THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD	64
JAIRUS' DAUGHTER	70
THE SYRO-PHŒNICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER	76
THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA	83
THE EPILEPTIC BOY	91
THE MAN BORN BLIND	98
THE MAN WITH THE DROPSY	105
THE TEN LEPERS	111
BLIND BARTIMÆUS	117
ZACCHÆUS	123
ST. PETER	129

PAGE

ST. MARY MAGDALENE 137

THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS 143

ST. THOMAS 149

ST. PAUL 155

THE PENITENT THIEF 163

HE HEALED THEM ALL

The Healing of the Blind Man of Bethsaida

"The path of the righteous is as the shining light. It shineth more and more unto the perfect day."
—PROV. iv. 18.

Read ST. MARK viii. 22–26.

THERE are important points of difference in the accounts of the miracles recorded in the Gospels. Is not this a striking proof of their inspiration? They are given for our learning, and in studying these differences, we are shown more and more of the Healing Grace of Our Blessed Lord. Thousands of sufferers were healed by Him, and yet, no doubt under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the evangelists were led to record healings which were instructive in the variety of their details.

In this miracle of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, the fact of the gradual healing at once attracts our attention. His seems to have been a peculiarly difficult case. Not that it was

difficult to Our Lord—to Him "in Whom dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily," it was nothing to heal the man completely and instantaneously—but the condition of the man called for more gradual treatment. God's care of each one of us is individual. "He knoweth our frame"; some are ready for the full light, others must be gradually drawn to it.

It is most important in considering the accounts of Our Lord's miracles to stop constantly and contemplate Him. We must remind ourselves not only of His great Power, but also of His capacity for "knowing what was in man." He saw far more than the outward condition of those who came to Him for healing. He could gauge the faith that was there, and He could detect all the hindrances to that faith. Above all, it is essential to keep in reverent recollection the fact of the great love that filled the Heart of Our Blessed Lord.

> ". . . the deep longing thirst divine
> That thirsted for the souls of men."

He was so quickly "moved with compassion" at the sight of suffering, and as soon as an appeal was made to Him, often, no doubt, before an appeal was made, His Love flowed out to the sufferers like the rays of the sun into a dark place. The moment of complete physical restoration was hailed by the onlookers as the miracle, but the healing wonder began unseen, as soon as the sufferer opened his soul to receive the healing rays of the Love of Christ.

The blind man of Bethsaida was brought to Our Lord by his friends who urgently besought Him to heal him. It is not recorded that he himself made an appeal for help. It seems as if his was a peculiarly difficult case. He was a captive, not merely physically, but in his soul. It is probable from the treatment which Our Lord gave him that he was very sensitive to outside influences, as, before his complete restoration could come, it was necessary to change his environment. Quite possibly he had the nervous sensibility of the artistic temperament, possibly he was psychic; in any case, his sensitiveness to outward things made it imperative that he should be led away from the crowd before his soul could attain to the peace in which Christ's Healing could operate.

"He took the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village." The friends who were accustomed to lead the blind man now stood aside, and Christ Himself took their place. A walk hand in hand with Jesus Christ! What an unspeakable privilege! Thought seems to stop and contemplation to begin, as we meditate upon it; and yet all the sick who are brought for Christ's Healing Touch to-day have the same privilege. A period of intimate communion with Christ as a spiritual preparation for healing is the general experience of those who come to Christ as the Great Physician. Instantaneous miracles of healing are not the general rule, though they certainly occur. Perhaps in the day when all things are

made clear to us, this pause for spiritual preparation will be the cause for our most adoring gratitude.

> "Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
> Not till then, how much I owe."

When Christ had led the blind man into solitude, He began his final healing. As they walked along hand in hand, without doubt the work of healing had begun. The streams of love from the Heart of Our Lord were flowing into the heart of the blind man, spiritual warmth and comfort were enfolding him, and the Hand that guided him was leading him into the way of peace.

Faith on the man's part was necessary, and apparently difficult. His friends had offered their faith for him, at first he had merely acquiesced in their arrangements, now he was called to co-operate in the work of his healing. Christ had to create in him the faith that was necessary for this co-operation. Faith is a spiritual gift, not a natural or acquired gift of the intellect.

The gradual healing of this man's blindness is very interesting from a medical point of view. All blind people suffer more or less from nervous strain, and the soothing of the nervous condition is essential before the restoration of sight, otherwise there is a great risk of mental unbalance. A blind girl, who is hoping for her healing from Christ, said the other day: "If I got back my sight suddenly I don't think I could bear it." Her blindness came on as the result of meningitis, and

her intense nervous suffering has brought about conditions which must be changed in order that she may be ready to receive the gift of sight.

Christ's method of healing was scientific. The blind are sensitive to touch, and twice He made an appeal to that sense. "He spit on his eyes, and laid His hands upon him." Then came the question: "Seest thou aught?" The healing was only partial, for the man saw men as trees walking. Then, with infinite patience and love, the Great Physician laid His Hands once more upon his eyes and the man "looked steadfastly," and saw all things clearly.

The healing was complete both in body and soul. Still the Eye of Christ saw a possible danger for the man. A sensitive temperament is not a disease, it is only a heightened capacity for feeling. The man was healed, but his original sensitive temperament remained, making him liable to unsettlement. It was quite probable that he would be upset if the crowd, which had been left behind, got news of the miracle, and thronged round him with excited and wondering comments. Hence the command to go straight back to his own home, and, "Do not even enter into the village."

The Paralysed Man at the Pool of Bethesda

"When I am poor and in heaviness; Thy help, O God, shall lift me up."—Ps. lxix. 30.

Read St. John v.

THERE is one very striking point about this miracle of the healing of the paralysed man at the Pool of Bethesda. It is one of the few recorded miracles in which Our Lord seems to have taken the initiative, and to have offered, unasked, the gift of health. In far the most of the recorded cases of healing, either the sick or their friends came and personally asked for help, and proved their faith by their persistence.

The scene of the miracle was Jerusalem whither Our Lord had gone up to keep the Passover Feast. He apparently had, according to His custom, spent the night outside the city, then so crowded, upon the Mount of Olives. He had entered the city by the Sheep Gate, the very gate through which He was to be hurried by the soldiers after His arrest in the Garden. Near this gate was one of the numerous reservoirs of Jerusalem—the Pool of

Bethesda. The water of the Pool was reputed to have healing properties, and close to it the sick used to congregate, sheltered from the fierce heat of the sun under five porches. Our Lord's Eye fell upon a mass of human suffering—"sick, blind, halt, withered." Apparently He, ever careful of rousing popular excitement in that storm-centre, Jerusalem, was moving about incognito.

Christ's Eye scanned the pathetic crowd, all so anxious to be healed by this wonderful water. Each man was too preoccupied in his endeavour to be first into the water, to pay much attention to the passers-by. It was a parable of the preoccupation of the world with its own concerns, and its indifference to spiritual things. The Great Healer was there, but they knew it not. Amongst the crowd one man specially attracted the notice of Christ. He was a paralysed man with no friends to talk to him whilst waiting, or to help him when the critical moment came. The Heart of Christ yearned over all the sufferers, but especially over that one. He saw more than his outward condition. He saw that that condition was the direct result of sin committed many years ago, and that he was embittered in soul by his long waiting and vain efforts to be healed. The man was in extremity. He had reached the darkest hour of his night, and, little as he knew it, help was to come to him that day, and in a way very different from the way he hoped.

The paralysed man made no spoken appeal, but his misery cried aloud for him to Christ. Appar-

ently Our Lord spoke to him, possibly in answer to a request for alms, and was told that the man had been ill for thirty-eight years. It was some consolation to the sufferer that a passing stranger should show a little interest in him. This is a part of the ministry of healing in which all can share. A real friendly interest in the sick has a healing value. The sick are quick to detect formal interest, but they respond to sincere kindliness. The story is told of George Herbert, the saintly poet and priest, that once a poor woman belonging to his parish came to see him, and kept him a long time. His wife remonstrated, but Herbert answered that the mere pouring out of her story had been a relief to her. His patient listening had been a real work of healing.

Christ next drew the man on by His friendly interest to tell out the bitterness of his soul. He was friendless. Quite possibly he had alienated all his friends by his disagreeableness, but he wanted them none the less. Then, because he had no friends, he had been disappointed of healing, time after time. Someone had always got into the water before he could. Little did the man think that Christ could be to him more than the greatest earthly friend, but the attention and sympathy of the stranger had been doing their work. He was being bathed in the rays of the healing Light of Christ. Our Lord as He talked to the man must have been scanning him closely to see whether he had faith to be healed. This was essential. Christ would not force the gift of health upon him, the

sick man must co-operate in the work of healing by the response of faith. Just as when, later on, St. Peter and St. John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple after they had by a searching glance detected in him faith to be healed, so, no doubt, the Glance of Christ pierced this man through and through to find out whether he could rise above all his misery by a soaring upward of his spirit to God.

Like a sudden flash of lightning Christ spoke the word of healing: "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk!" The words bore with them the power to carry them out. The man was at once made whole, and he used his newly restored energy to carry out Christ's commands to the letter. He rose up, took up the mattress on which he had lain so long, and carried it. It was a fit symbol of the end of his captivity, of the triumph of the spiritual over the material.

Naturally this miracle caused a commotion. An Eastern crowd collects quickly, and is easily excited. Our Lord had special reasons for avoiding undue notice just then in Jerusalem. He therefore withdrew Himself quickly from the place, before, apparently, the man had had time to thank Him or to ask His Name. Full of thankfulness, the man made his way up to the Temple, still carrying his bed. Quite certainly he must have gone there to give thanks. On the way he met with criticism from zealous Jews. It was the Sabbath Day, and carrying a burden was unnecessary work, and constituted a breach of the Law of Moses. His critics

could not sympathise with him in his radiant happiness and thankfulness, they only sourly pointed out his fault. When questioned, the man could only say that his healer, whose name he did not know, had told him to carry his bed. Suddenly Christ appeared to him in the Temple enclosure and spoke startling words. The man had disclosed much about his state when questioned by Our Lord at the Pool of Bethesda, he now learnt that his Healer knew still more about him. Our Lord's Eye had pierced through into the depths of the man's soul, and had seen that sin was the remote cause of all his suffering. In healing his body, Christ had also cleansed and healed his soul. The sin was forgiven and purged, all the effects of his disappointment and bitterness had been undone, and the man was now "every whit whole." The second appearance of Christ to the man was to certify to him his complete wholeness, and to make clear to him that sin was at the root of his trouble. "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more." The great mercy of the Healer did not preclude sternness, and the message ended with a solemn warning: "Lest a worse thing befall thee."

We are not told, but surely the man must have fallen at the Feet of Christ, and with his fervent thanksgivings have mingled fullest confession with full purpose of amendment. Who can doubt but that he asked and was told the Name of his Healer, and that "Jesus"—"Saviour"—became henceforth to him the name above every other name?

" Jesus, the Name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace.

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim
And spread through all the earth abroad
The honour of Thy Name."

The Fever of St. Peter's Wife's Mother

"Have mercy upon me—Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death—That I may show forth all Thy praises within the ports of the daughter of Sion."—Ps. ix. 13, 14.

Read St. Matt. viii. 14–17; St. Mark i. 29–34; St. Luke iv. 38–41.

THE miracle of the healing of St. Peter's wife's mother followed immediately upon the casting out of an unclean spirit from a man in the synagogue of Capernaum. This miracle had caused a great sensation. The report spread through all the neighbourhood that a wonderful man was in their midst who actually had power to cast out evil spirits. St. Mark sums up the amazed comments of those who heard the news in a few vivid sentences: "What is this? A new teaching? With authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!" The excitement in the synagogue was very great. It would seem from St. Mark's account, as if Our Lord was hurried away at last by His disciples, to escape

further comments, and was taken to Simon Peter's house.

The house was not merely a temporary resting place for Him, it was to be the scene of other miracles. Simon's wife's mother was lying very ill of a fever. St. Luke, with the accuracy of a doctor, notes that it was a "great fever." A fight was going on in the woman. Some malignant germ had attacked her, and nature was doing her best to defeat this germ. The high temperature was a sign of the battle. We can imagine the woman lying on her little, low bed, perhaps in the common living-room of the house. It is just possible that the attack was sudden, and that St. Peter knew nothing of it because it happened in his absence. As soon as Christ entered, before He was offered any refreshment, the anxious mistress of the house hurried to tell Him of her trouble. Besides the master of the house, St. Peter, three other disciples were present. St. Andrew was a near relation, and St. James and St. John were close friends, so that the atmosphere was that of a family circle. There were, so far as we know, no curious onlookers, all present were full of love and faith. It was an atmosphere of sympathy in which the mighty works of Christ might be readily expected. Testimony has been given, again and again, that when the sick are brought into church at missions of healing, the spiritual atmosphere of which they are conscious is of very great importance. The sick are very sensitive to their surroundings, and the earnest faith of the

intercessors and other helpers is of the utmost help to their own faith.

A Toronto professor writing of a mission of healing that was held in St. James' Cathedral in that city, says that the only explanation that he could give of the wonderful spiritual atmosphere that was there was that Christ Himself was present, and that His Peace was felt. He says: "It was not mental suggestion, it was not psycho-therapeutics, of that I am profoundly convinced. What was it, then? The only answer I can give, the only answer that anyone can give, is the inevitable one, it was the mighty working of the Spirit of God, it was the Healing Power of the Blessed Saviour that brooded over that great throng. . . . All speak of the wonderful, overpowering consciousness of the Presence of God. . . . God was in their midst, ready and yearning to give them their hearts' desire, if only their faith was great enough to perceive His Presence there, and their hearts open to receive His Healing Power."

The sick woman was of special importance in that little home. Not only was she a close relation, but unusual calls would, in all probability, be made upon her in the time to come. The master of the house would be increasingly away from home as his work as an apostle developed, and it is natural enough to suppose that St. Peter's wife would expect more than usual help and counsel from her mother in the guidance of her family. Our Lord Who promised His disciples that whatever earthly

possessions and ties they gave up for His sake should be made up to them an hundredfold, even in this life, would see to it that St. Peter's household should not want anything that was really necessary to it. There might be times of anxiety when faith would be tried, but God's providence for that household would be manifestly seen.

The performance of the miracle was apparently very swift. The sick woman herself—raving, no doubt, and in a high fever—could be of no help. She could not vouch for her faith in the Great Healer, her great need was her passport into the haven of His Heart. Accompanied by His followers, strong in their faith in His Power, Our Lord went straight to the bedside of the woman. A great reinforcement was to come to the help of the forces that were battling against that malignant germ, for the Creator of nature had suddenly appeared on her side. First of all rebuking the fever as a manifestation of evil, Christ expelled the alien forces from the body of the woman, and then, taking her by the hand, He raised her up, pouring into her by His Touch new life from the Source of all life.

"The fever left her, and she ministered unto them." There was nothing of the usual after-effects of a fever. There was no weakness either of body or mind. Completely restored, the woman rose up at once, and began to carry out her usual duties, but surely with more than usual zeal? How she must have loved to do service to Him

Who had set her so completely free. Her service was an instant response of love.

There is a good deal of would-be pious talk about the value of sickness. It is quite true that good can come out of sickness, that great grace is often given to those who have been invalids for many years, and that their sickrooms are often a holy-of-holies to those who enter them. These facts, however, should not be allowed to cloud the truth that health and not sickness is the Will of God for His children. God very often overrules sickness for good; He does so by bringing good out of evil, but the sickness itself is evil. Christ when on earth resented sickness and all manner of infirmity. He saw in them the manifestation of a malign influence—"an enemy hath done this"—and He Who declared that His only occupation was to do the Will of His Father, carried out this Will by healing "all manner of sickness and infirmity," whenever it was deliberately brought before Him. Christ is the same to-day as when He was on earth. He still resents sickness and all that "mars and saddens God's fair earth." He still longs to set man free from every thing that hinders his spiritual development—from all sickness, and all selfishness that breeds social disorders. It is for the Church to bring all these disorders to receive His Healing Touch.

For the Church to rise to this height—what is it but "to make full proof of her ministry"?—prayer is the first essential, but definite teaching is needed as well. Sometimes sick people who have been

invalids for many years, actually prefer sickness to health. They have been so much accustomed to being the centre of interest in their homes that they will not give up their positions. Selfishness takes many subtle forms. It is the Church's work to tell such sufferers that not only is sickness contrary to the Will of God, but that God sets men free from bodily suffering in order that they may do Him greater service. This last consideration should be well weighed by those who come to seek the Healing Touch of Christ. "Is it right to expect Christ to heal me simply that I may go back to a worldly, self-pleasing life?" The woman who was healed of the fever was fit to be healed. She at once gave thanks by ministering to Christ. A great glory was cast about her ordinary household duties because they were done for Him. Then, by the law of spiritual growth, more opportunities for spiritual service were given to her. In the evening before the sudden darkness of the Eastern night fell upon Capernaum, there was a great company of sick people outside the door of St. Peter's house. Many mighty works of healing were done that night. A good deal of organisation and sympathetic handling must have been needed to manage that suffering crowd, and surely Peter's wife's mother must have been very active in that wider work of ministration? She had experienced both severe sickness and miraculous healing, and her sympathy and faith would be invaluable in upholding the faith of others who came for the Healing Touch of Christ.

" Still the weary, sick and dying
Need a brother's, sister's care;
On Thy higher help relying
May we now their burden share.

May each child of Thine be willing,
Willing both in hand and heart,
All the law of love fulfilling,
Ever comfort to impart."

The Healing of the Leper

"This is the Will of God, even your sanctification."
—1 Thess. iv. 3

Read St. Matt. viii. 1–4; St. Mark i. 40–45.

CHRIST was at the beginning of His earthly Ministry. It was marked by a great outburst of "mighty works." This was especially noticeable in Capernaum, where He was so often to be found that it was called peculiarly "His Own city." One very remarkable time of healing had taken place at Capernaum, when just before sunset the sick had been brought in large numbers, and Our Lord had healed them all. It would seem from St. Mark's account as if, on that occasion, all the sick and devil-possessed in the town had been brought together and healed. It was a regular gaol delivery.

The following morning, long before dawn, Our Lord had left St. Peter's house and had withdrawn into a desert place to pray. He had come to earth to do His Father's Will, and He sought direction in that early morning prayer and communion as to His future work. St. Peter, finding when He awoke that his great Guest was not in the house,

came to search for Him, and when he found Him, Our Lord told him the result of these hours of prayer. St. Peter had said in words which conveyed a meaning far deeper than he knew: "All are seeking Thee." Christ knew of the hunger of humanity for Himself, and that Capernaum was not to be more favoured than other places. He had decided upon His plan of campaign. "Let us go," He said to His disciple, "into the next towns that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth." Then began an itinerant mission of preaching and healing through the cities of Galilee.

This mission seems to have developed into outdoor preaching among the hills. The cities of Galilee were crowded places, and what was more natural than that those who had been attracted by Christ's teaching should come together out of the towns, gather round Him on a level place among the Galilean hills and learn more of His teaching? What Christ taught on those occasions has come down to us in the Sermon on the Mount.

When Our Lord came down from the hills, He was met, just as when he came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, by one who badly needed His healing touch. A leper had come to ask for help. A great multitude was following Our Lord, and they must have felt keenly the contrast between the calm and beauty of their recent experience and the sight which they now saw. Taught by the Law of Moses, the Jews in the crowd would avoid all contact with the leper, but ceremonial defile-

ment meant nothing to Christ. He was ready to help the leper in whatever way was best for him, whether by word or touch. The individual care of Christ for each soul is a matter for reverent meditation. The best of earthly helpers make mistakes even when they are most anxious to help souls, and sufferers shrink back from any rule-of-thumb methods in dealing with their deepest needs. Christ took each case individually. His "kind but searching Glance" saw deep into the very soul of everyone that came to Him for help; His diagnosis was unerring, and His healing perfect.

There is a very beautiful Russian legend which illustrates this individual care of Our Blessed Lord for sufferers. It describes how a painter once tried to make a sketch of the Face of Christ. The artist was sitting on the hill-side, and on the opposite hill-side was Christ Who had just finished preaching to the people. The sick were being brought for healing, and, to the despair of the artist, the expression upon Christ's Face changed so constantly that he could never capture a likeness. The reason was that the Holy Face changed as It looked upon each sufferer. It reflected the individual concern of Christ for each sick person. He literally was "afflicted in all their affliction"—so real was His sympathy.

The leper who asked for healing, unlike the ten lepers, came close up to Our Lord, and, prostrating himself at His Feet, worshipped Him, saying: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!" It was an unconscious insult. He addressed Christ as if

He were some Eastern potentate who gave or withheld gifts capriciously. He did not realise, and how few Christians even now fully realise, that the Love from the Heart of Christ streams forth as unceasingly as rays from the sun, and that we are only limited by our failure to receive? What good man can see suffering of any kind and not long to relieve it? Why then should it be doubted that Christ, when suffering is brought to Him, also longs to relieve it? Those who love most know what pain it is when their longing to help others is unsatisfied. How much greater is the suffering of Christ when the sickness and sorrow of the world are not brought to Him? He has unbounded Power to help, but opportunities for using that Power are so often denied Him. The Church by her refusal to accept Christ's direct healing for the bodies of men can win approval from the world for her scientific caution, but she stands condemned before God. She is keeping nailed back upon the Cross those Blessed Hands which were ever ready to stretch forth and touch and heal the sick when Our Lord was upon earth. "Why did you not bring the sick to Me?" will be a very solemn question for the Church to answer in the last great day. It will not be enough to answer that there were risks—that the sick might have lost their faith if they had not been healed, that the medical profession might have been offended, etc., etc. She will be reminded of the man, who in the parable spoken by Our Lord, buried his talent in the ground, rather than risk it in trade, because

there was a danger of losing it. God grant that instead of receiving a fearful condemnation, the Church may repent in time, and show forth the full glory of the unchanging Christ as Healer both of the bodies as well as the souls of men.

In instant response to the cry of the leper, Our Lord stretched forth His Hand, saying: "I will, be thou made clean!" St Mark notes that Our Lord healed the man because He was "moved with compassion." It seems strange that so many are contented to accept the theory that Our Lord worked miracles to establish His Messianic claim, and to deduce from this that, now that this claim is established, the gifts of healing are withdrawn from the Church. This to assert that Christ worked miracles in a businesslike way, with a definite aim in view. Such a contention, like the remark of the leper, is an unintentional insult to Our Lord. He did His miracles because the Love in His Heart "could not be hid." Given faith in the sick person to act as a channel, that Divine Love could not but flow forth. He literally felt for sufferers, and was "moved with compassion" towards them.

The touch of Christ and His Word brought instant cleansing and new life to the leper. "Straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean." The man was naturally overjoyed, and his Healer detected a danger. Two commands were insistently laid upon him by Christ. One was to fulfil the requirements of the Law of Moses, and to go and show himself to the priest. The second

was to be quiet about what had happened. In all probability, the man carried out the first injunction. He was, no doubt, a good Jew, and he wanted to be free to mingle again with his fellow men. The second command he refused to obey, for he set to work to make the news of his healing as public as possible. It was natural enough, but he did wrong. The least return that he should have made for the great benefit that he had received was to obey orders implicitly. His self-will, disguise it under what name he pleased, was instantly used by the powers of evil as a weapon against Christ. The man spoilt Christ's plan of campaign. The itinerant mission from city to city had to be abandoned, and Christ remained for a time in desert places. Those who have received great help from Spiritual Healing would do well to meditate upon this point. Satan, like a caravan-robber, singles out the richest convoys for his fiercest attacks. Incessant watchfulness is needed lest those who have received the most should fail through any form of spiritual pride.

The Paralysed Man who was borne of four

"Praise the Lord, O my soul, . . . Who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities."
—Ps. ciii. 1 and 3.

Read St. Mark ii. 1–12: St. Luke v. 17–26.

THE outstanding feature of this miracle is the part played by the sick man's friends. So far as we can tell from the two accounts, the sick man himself was quite passive. It was his four friends who conceived the idea of bringing him to Christ, and by their faith and love they surmounted unforeseen difficulties. Faith is absolutely necessary before Our Lord can do a work of healing, but this seems to have been an occasion upon which, by mystic substitution, the faith of his friends was accepted in place of that of the sick man.

The scene of the miracle was St. Peter's house in Capernaum. The occasion was very remarkable. Christ's teaching had by now attracted so much attention throughout the Holy Land, that official deputies had come from every village in Galilee and Judæa and from Jerusalem to judge of the

soundness of His teaching. Pharisees and rabbis had crowded together into that little house and court-yard, and were ready to sit in judgment upon the self-constituted teacher, who, without any regular training, taught with great authority, and misled thousands of the people by His free interpretations of the Law of Moses. The atmosphere was charged with criticism. The deputies were, most of them, narrow-minded bigots, who had already decided against Christ. They were to hear teaching that day that went beyond anything they had expected, and were also to see a great miracle of healing. Our Lord did not refuse to teach on that day. No doubt He already knew in spirit what lay before Him. He could see in the malignity of His critics the working of the powers of evil: it was another of His many temptations, and He met it boldly. Our Lord was also conscious of a special access of healing power that day—"the Power of the Lord was with Him to heal." Those who have the gift of healing know that sometimes the gift is felt more strongly than at other times. They meet, or may meet later on, someone who has special need of healing, and the gift in themselves is intensified. It is, as it were, a call to service.

Meanwhile, a sufferer was on his way. It was a palsied man. He was quite helpless, for he had to be carried on his bed by four friends. Quite possibly the paralysis had deprived him of speech, for he is not recorded to have said one word. Perhaps there were difficulties at the start. Relations and neighbours may have pointed out the folly of

dragging off a sick man in the heat of the day to seek help from Jesus of Nazareth, Whose character was in question. Let them, at least, wait to get the report of the committee that was sitting that day. Then the journey may have been long, and the dust and heat and jolting may have made the sick man restless and unwilling to go on. Still the friends persisted.

At last they reached Capernaum, easily found the house by the crowd outside, and then were faced with an apparently insuperable difficulty—the crowd refused to make way for them. We can imagine their selfishness, and how they literally turned their backs upon the sad little group. They felt they were there on important business, they, too, had made a journey to get there, and they meant to hear the teaching. Let the sick man and his friends stop making a disturbance and go away. All the time, the healing power was strong in Our Lord, His Heart was calling to that sick man, and may we not believe that there were besides angel-helpers to console the four friends and to give them counsel? The ministration of angels in the work of Spiritual Healing is a subject for reverent meditation. Human friends do what they can to bring the sick to receive the Healing Touch of Christ, but who can tell how much the holy angels are helping all the time? They, acting by God's appointment in their "wonderful order," link together and supplement human activities, and bring a heavenly atmosphere of peace into the place where the sick are laid at the Feet of Christ. A lady who came

to a Healing Mission at Salisbury Cathedral, in Rhodesia, was very conscious of this angelic ministry. "When I came out of the Cathedral," she wrote, "I felt as though there were thousands and thousands of angels round it, hedging it in, and making it 'holy ground.'"

The courage of the four friends did not fail. They meant to bring their sick friend into the Presence of Christ, and if they could not get him in by the door, there was the roof. There must have been an outside staircase up to the roof, for the crowd made it impossible to get at it any other way. No doubt it was not easy to get the bed up the stairs; the sick man must have had to endure more jolting, and to lie at a very uncomfortable angle, but they reached the top at last. Conventions were nothing to these four eager friends. It was one thing to trespass, but much more to do damage. Heedless of the feelings of the master of the house, they set to work to break through the roof, lifting up the tiles and smashing the plaster, in order to lower the bed into the room where Christ was preaching. One last difficulty remained —what about ropes? They could not have foreseen such a contingency when they started. Is it not possible that they unwound their girdles and used them as ropes? Those who bring the sick to Christ must be ready to make personal sacrifices. At last the goal was reached, and the sick man was lowered to the Feet of Christ. The listeners had been forced to make a way for him; the eager loving faces of the friends were watching from above,

and Christ, looking down at the sick man, knew why His Healing Power was so specially present that day.

The searching Glance of Christ at once saw what the sick man most needed. His physical condition was obvious to all, but only Christ could see that there was paralysis in his soul, due to sin. His first words, therefore, brought healing to the man's soul. The bystanders could see no change, but the man himself must have felt unspeakable relief as the weight of sin which had, perhaps, weighed him down for years, was lifted from him. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee!" The sacrament of penance is a healing sacrament. St. Pacian, a Spanish bishop of the fourth century, wrote of it: "God grant that none of the faithful after baptism fall into the pit of death; but accuse not God's mercy, Who hath provided a remedy even for those that are sick. Does the infernal serpent continually carry poison, and has not Christ a remedy? Fear sin, but not repentance. Be ashamed not to be delivered of it. Who would snatch a plank from one lost by shipwreck? Who will envy the healing of wounds?"

The gracious healing words of Christ at once aroused the opposition of His critics. The scribes and Pharisees began to argue that this was blasphemy, for God alone could forgive sins. They were right in this contention, but they were too blinded in their self-satisfaction to receive the truth. They were gathered together to judge of Christ's teaching, and they were "judges with

evil thoughts"; they aspired to lead the people, and they themselves were spiritually blind. Christ's saying: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," was an assertion of His Divine Mission, it was a sudden flashing forth of His Godhead. The deputies had come to hear His teaching, and they failed to receive it because they were not open-minded. The arguing of the scribes and Pharisees was silent; apparently everyone was too much awed to speak. Christ, however, knew their thoughts intuitively, and exposed them by asking: "Whether is easier to say—'Thy sins be forgiven thee'? or to say—'Arise up and walk'?" It was a great work to heal the body, but much greater to heal the soul. Then, as a sign that both forms of healing were possible to Him, Our Lord spoke the word of complete release to the palsied man: "I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy couch and go into thy house." The man was now "every whit whole." His bodily healing could not come until his soul had first been healed, because his soul was the channel through which Spiritual Healing came to him. It is of the utmost importance that those who seek the Healing of Christ in His Church should first of all examine their consciences to see if there is any disease of the soul that needs to be remedied. Those who come best prepared receive the greatest blessings.

The bodily healing of the man was complete. The Word of Christ Which had cleansed his soul had also made his body whole. He at once rose up before everyone—we can imagine the excitement

among his friends on the roof!—took up his bed and went home, glorifying God. Those who had refused to make way for him before, now made a clear pathway. Surely words from the Psalms must have been in his mouth as he walked along in his gladness of heart. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name!" His soul had been set free no less wonderfully than his body. "We have seen strange things to-day!" exclaimed the onlookers. They had indeed. Christ had "manifested forth His Glory," though few were able to perceive the true wonder of it. A cleansed soul is His chief Glory. A ninth-century saint once said when they spoke to him of miracles,—"One miracle I would, if worthy, ask the Lord to grant me; and that is, that by His Grace He would make me a good man."

" They came to Thee the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore,
Thy Heart the well of life they find,
Thine Ear their open door.

Ah! who can tell the joy in Palestine,
What smiles and tears of rescued throngs!
Their lees of life were turned to wine,
Their prayer to shouts and songs.

The story dear our wise men fable call,
Give paltry facts the mighty range;
To me it seems just what should fall,
And nothing very strange.

And were I deaf and lame and blind and sore,
I scarce would care for cure to ask;
Another prayer should haunt Thy door,
Set Thee a harder task.

If Thou art Christ, see here this heart of mine,
Torn, moaning, empty and unblest!
Had ever heart more need of Thine,
If Thine indeed hath rest?

Thy Word, Thy Hand right soon did scare the bane
That in their bodies death did breed.
If Thou canst cure my deeper pain,
Then art Thou Lord indeed."

The Man with the Withered Hand

"Love, therefore, is the fulfilment of the Law."
—Rom. xiii. 10.

Read St. Matt. xii. 9-14; St. Mark iii. 1–6; St. Luke vi. 6–11.

THE miracle of the man with the withered hand was one that aroused great controversy. It became a focus point of strong emotions. The hatred of the enemies of Christ was intensified as a consequence of this miracle, whilst, on the other hand, the reputation of Christ as a Healer was magnified, so that, after it, greater multitudes than ever, both Jews and Gentiles, flocked to Him, bringing their sick to be healed.

Not long before Christ worked this miracle, He had definitely laid down the principle that He was Lord of the Sabbath. He had been walking through the cornfields on the Sabbath Day, and His disciples had picked ears of corn, and had eaten them after first separating the chaff by rubbing them in their hands. The strict Jews at once scented a breach of the Law of Moses. Puerile as it may seem to us, they declared that the disciples had broken

the Sabbath by doing unnecessary work. Christ thereupon defended His disciples by quoting the action of David, the national hero, who was blameless although he and his followers had once actually eaten shewbread which was for the priests alone; and He laid down the law that works of mercy, done to relieve necessity, were always excusable, although they might cause a breach of the Law. Mercy was to come before judgement.

Not long afterwards, on another Sabbath Day, Our Lord upheld publicly the ruling which He had given. He had entered into a synagogue, and, no doubt, was given a prominent place. Probably He had been asked by the ruler of the synagogue to read and comment upon a portion of the Scriptures. There were present Christ's enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, envious as ever, and on the watch to find fault. Christ's adherents were there, too, and, no doubt, there were present also many men of goodwill who were not blinded by prejudice, and who were willing to listen to the great teacher and to judge for themselves.

Amongst the crowd there was a man in great need of help, for he had his right hand withered. The man was heavily handicapped for the battle of life. The Jewish rabbis had wisely laid down that every Jew should be taught some handicraft. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning," a Psalm-writer had exclaimed, showing the importance of a skilled right hand. Whether this crippled man had come into the synagogue as a worshipper or to get help from the

great Healer, we can only guess, what is certain is that as soon as the Eyes of Christ fell upon him, He gained the sympathy of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and the mercy of the Heart of the Healing Christ began to flow out towards him.

Any form of suffering was, and still is, a challenge to Christ. It becomes a battlefield to Him. On this Sabbath Day the two opposites were, the man whose hand was useless because it was lifeless, and Christ in Whom was the Eternal Life. Given faith on the part of the crippled man—faith that was a deliberate turning to Christ to the exclusion of all others—what could follow but a great miracle of healing?

The eyes of the scribes and Pharisees fell upon the man whose hand was withered, they felt that this might make a test case such as they were longing for. Suffering and deformity are very common in the East; they did not look with compassion on the afflicted man, but they turned to watch Our Lord, with keen, hard eyes, to see whether He would dare do a work of healing on the Sabbath Day "that they might find how to accuse Him." Their friends in Jerusalem—the chief priests and elders of the people—would be delighted to get from them such a well-authenticated charge against Christ. Their "zeal for righteousness" would be well established, there would be no doubt that they were true followers of Moses and faithful sons of Abraham.

Our Lord, as always, was completely master of the situation. He heard the unspoken cry fo

help that came from the crippled man, and He felt also the cross-currents of suspicion and hatred that came from His enemies, and the curiosity and expectancy of the rest of the assembly. With all this in His consciousness, Our Lord gave His full attention first of all to the crippled man. In sharp, short sentences, like a general on a battle-field, He issued His orders,—"Rise up, and stand forth in the midst." There was to be no secrecy in this work of healing. The man at once got up and stood out in the midst of the assembly. We can imagine how they all, as they sat on the ground, turned their heads up and looked at him. Surely Our Lord by this order meant to make an appeal to the hearts of the onlookers? Even the scribes and Pharisees might be moved to compassion when they saw so plainly the state of the man and his eager look to the Great Healer. Then Christ carried the war into the enemies' country. If they would not learn through their hearts, they should be intellectually routed. Using their own method of argument, He questioned the teachers of the people upon the lawfulness of working upon the Sabbath Day.

"Was it ever allowable to work on the Sabbath?"

"Might they do a good work?"

"If life was in danger, might they save it on a Sabbath Day?"

"Was it not customary on the Sabbath to work to the extent of pulling a sheep out of a pit?"

This shower of pointed questions, like a flight of well-aimed arrows, was overwhelming. The enemy

was vanquished—put to silence, but not convinced. "They held their peace," and listened to the irresistible conclusion,—"Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day." Mercy was to be preferred before the Law, for "Mercy rejoiceth against judgement." God, it is true, had rested from His labour of creation on the Sabbath Day, but Life and Love flow forth from Him unceasingly, for they are of the very Essence of the Godhead. A work of healing, therefore, was proper to the Sabbath Day.

Before doing His work of mercy, Christ gave one comprehensive glance at His adversaries. It was a terrible look—an anticipation of the Judgement Day when the awful paradox of the Wrath of the Lamb will be manifested. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts." They had given themselves over to the powers of evil, and were deliberately closing their hearts against good. They had done this of their own free-will, and were therefore blameworthy. The day was coming when they and their fellow-conspirators at Jerusalem, would be so completely under the domination of evil, that their hearts would be absolutely hardened, and they would crucify Christ, not knowing what they did.

Meanwhile the patient was waiting. His prompt obedience to orders had proved his willingness to do whatever he was told. We can imagine him standing, oblivious of the scribes and Pharisees, hardly hearing the rapid argument about the right

use of the Sabbath, with his eyes fixed upon the Face of Christ. Whatever the delay, he felt that his healing would come; there was pity and love for him in the Face that looked with grief and anger upon those who obstinately set themselves against the Love of God. At last came the words: "Stretch forth thy hand," and the man, instantly obeying, found that life from the Source of all Life had entered into him, and that his withered right hand was restored. We can imagine how he at once put both his hands together and gave thanks to God before them all. The scribes and Pharisees, beaten in argument, and their authority publicly set aside, at once withdrew and made an unnatural coalition with their political enemies, the Herodians, against Christ. A like unnatural bond was later on to join Pilate and Herod together. The "men of goodwill," and all the unprejudiced who saw this great work rejoiced and spread the news abroad, so that Our Lord judged it fit to leave that district for a time; greater crowds than ever flocked to Him from every part, both Jews and Gentiles, and brought their sick for healing.

The Centurion's Servant

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. . . . Remember all thy offerings . . . grant thy heart's desire."
—Ps. xx. 1, 3, 4.

Read St. Luke vii. 1–10; St. Matt. viii. 5–13.

THERE is some difficulty in reconciling the accounts given by St. Luke and St. Matthew of this miracle of healing the centurion's servant. Obviously the two evangelists are telling the same story, but with this important difference. According to St. Matthew the centurion himself came in person to Our Lord to plead for his servant, whereas St. Luke lays great stress upon the fact that the centurion was too humble to approach Christ himself, but sent two deputations to represent him. As the distinguishing note of this miracle is the extraordinary humility of the centurion, may not the explanation be that St. Matthew uses hyperbole when he represents the centurion as addressing Our Lord with his own mouth? A parallel to this is found in the Epistle to Philemon, in which St. Paul fervently pleads for the runaway

slave, Onesimus, whom he sends back to his master, Philemon, with the Epistle. St. Paul looks upon Onesimus as a very dear spiritual son, and identifies himself with him so closely that he writes: "Whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart."

The scene of this miracle was laid in Capernaum to which Our Lord had returned after His itinerant mission throughout the cities and villages of Galilee. His fame as a healer was very great in Capernaum. He had healed at the synagogue and at St. Peter's house, and no one in the city could fail to know that, attribute His Power to whom they would, it would be wise to turn to Him in case of sickness. As Christ entered Capernaum, He was at once implored to come to the help of a Roman soldier, a centurion's servant. His master belonged to the detested army of occupation, and yet he was a *persona grata* with the Jews. He was a man of singularly attractive character, the more so, because he displayed qualities the very opposite to what were expected from a man in his position. Instead of scorning the Jews and riding rough-shod over their religious susceptibilities, as Pilate did, the centurion was attracted to the religion of the Jews; quite possibly he was a proselyte, and he had actually gone so far as to build a synagogue for them. The centurion was not only tolerant and open-minded, he had an affectionate heart. The servant who was lying ill was "dear unto him." There is something most attractive in the juxtaposition of contrasting qualities in a

character; when, for example, a soldier, a man of affairs and, on occasion, necessarily stern in action, has, at the same time, a gentle, unworldly spirit.

The soldier servant of the centurion was lying very ill of the palsy, in great pain, and at the point of death. The thoughts of his master had naturally turned to Christ. Possibly it was in the very synagogue that he had built that Christ had cast out the unclean spirit. Much as he longed to get the great Healer to come to his servant, the centurion was too modest to approach Christ himself. Possibly he had heard reports that Christ considered His Mission to be primarily to the Jews, and felt too humble to claim an exemption for himself, so he sent a band of elders of the Jews to plead for him. They did their work well. "They besought Him earnestly, saying: 'He is worthy that Thou shouldst do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue.'" Note at this point that though it was quite true, from Christ's Own words, that He felt during His earthly ministry that the Jews were His first consideration, yet He refused no appeal either from Jew or Gentile, rich or poor. Christianity is for all races and for all classes. It is catholic in its fullest sense. Our Lord was born in a stable, but was buried in a rich man's tomb. He loved the Chosen People with a peculiar yearning, but his Ears were also open to cries of distress from the Gentiles.

In answer to the urgent representations of the centurion's friends, Our Lord answered: "I will

come and heal him." At once the procession turned to go to the house of the Roman soldier. No doubt it grew larger as it got nearer, as the people in the street, ever ready to see some new miracle, got wind of what was happening, and fell in behind. Meanwhile the centurion was watching anxiously by his servant. Surely as soon as his message reached Our Lord, he must have felt some touch with Him, some sudden peace and assurance that all was well? In Spirit Our Lord was already in that house, healing rays from His Heart of Love were filling that sick room, bringing peace, and preparing the sick man for the wonder that was to come. We have a proverb: "Coming events cast their shadows before them." With all reverence, we may say that before Our Lord reached a sick bed, the effect of His Presence was already felt.

No doubt there were watchers on the flat roof of the centurion's house to signal the approach of Our Lord. Possibly they could note the whole proceedings—the arrival of Christ and His disciples at the gate of Capernaum, His colloquy with the elders of the Jews, His turning to go with them, and lastly, His near approach to the house. The centurion was told of the nearness of Christ, and then that man of surprises did another astonishing thing. He sent out a second band of friends to ask Christ not to come any further, but "Say the word, and my servant shall be healed." How account for this message? Even Christ Himself marvelled at the faith of the man. The reason the centurion gave for his conduct was two-fold,—

first his sense of unimportance, and next his understanding of the dignity of Christ. It was a case of spiritual enrichment; to him who had so much already, more had been given. He was already "rich toward God" in simplicity of soul and sincere desire for the highest things; now, as he waited for Christ's arrival, surely he was already in His Presence and had received more grace? His humility was deepened. He had thought himself unworthy to approach Our Lord in person, with a request, now he shrank from asking Him to enter his house. He himself was a man used to send commands to others, and to receive prompt obedience; surely then the Great Healer Whose battle was against disease, would also issue orders which would certainly be obeyed? The centurion had arrived at a consciousness of Christ in His Authority. "The eye sees what it brings with it the power to see." The Roman soldier, accustomed both to use and to respect authority, was able to feel the Authority of Christ. With a great leap of faith, arguing from the known to the unknown, and clear-sighted in his humility, he bowed low before the Power of Christ. Hence that wonderful message: "Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof. . . . Say the word and my servant shall be healed."

Instantly the servant was made whole. Most remarkable of all the details connected with this miracle was the effect upon Christ Himself. He marvelled at the centurion's faith. "Verily I say

unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." It was a surprise that brought a shock of joy to the Blessed Heart that was so often wounded. He saw in the faith of this Roman soldier a presage of the gathering of the Gentiles from all quarters of the earth. On the Last Great Day there would be many surprises. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness."

The Demoniac Man of Gadara

"The Lord looseth men out of prison."—Ps. cxlvi. 7.

Read St. Mark v. 1–20; St. Luke viii. 26–39.

THE account of this freeing of the man of Gadara is preceded in the three Gospel accounts by the incident of the stilling of the storm on the Lake of Galilee. Christ had been preaching and healing in Galilee, and the great strain of the work had told upon Him. He was True Man as well as True God, and as man He knew well the burden of mental and bodily fatigue. He seems on this occasion to have felt an imperative need for rest, so He proposed to His disciples that they should cross over the Lake to the sparsely inhabited desert shore on the other side, where the hills sloped down abruptly into the water. It was night, and Our Lord at once fell asleep, leaving the disciples to manage the ship. Suddenly there arose a great storm, and the crew, accustomed as they were to all weathers upon that lake, were frightened, because the boat seemed upon the point of sinking. They awoke Christ, and He rebuked the wind and calmed the sea, and at once the storm ceased.

Reading the accounts attentively, it seems clear that this was an unusual storm. Christ was on His way to do a mighty work in which He was to challenge the powers of evil. What was more likely than that those powers should try to prevent His landing on the shores of Gadara? He was physically tired, and it is characteristic of Satan that he attacks when his foe is weakest. This attack, then, was another of the temptations of Christ, and shared, too, by His disciples. Cf. "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations."—St. Luke xxii. 28. In spirit, Our Lord, no doubt, knew of the work that lay before Him on the other side of the Lake, and when He was awakened by His terrified disciples, He was fully in command of the situation. He saw through the wiles of His enemy who was trying to use the powers of nature against their Creator, and He at once asserted His Authority to command peace both to the wind and sea, and they obeyed Him. It was a foe already worsted whom Our Lord landed to meet on the shores of Gadara.

A terrible case of possession was the new piece of work which lay before Our Lord. There lived a man in that part who was the terror of all who saw him. He had fled from town life and lurked about in empty rock-hewn tombs, or roamed amongst the mountains, obviously in great suffering, for he constantly cried out and cut himself with stones. His fellow men were terrified of him; they had made some attempt to keep him under control by binding him with chains, but he always

broke loose. His strength was superhuman: "No man had strength to tame him."

As Christ landed, this unhappy man saw Him from a distance, no doubt he was on a hill top, and he ran down at once to meet Him. He offered no violence, but prostrated himself at the Feet of Christ, and cried out with a loud voice: "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not." Notice the contradictions in the behaviour of this unhappy man. If he wanted to escape from Our Lord, why did he come near Him at all, why not wander away further into his haunts among the mountains? Surely the fact was that he was drawn to Christ for healing in spite of the protests of the evil spirits that possessed him? The power of the Love of Christ drew the true self of this man to Him, whilst the spirits that possessed him did all in their power to keep him away. To them it was torture to be in the Presence of Christ. They recognised Him, in all His Authority, and trembled. Their darkness could not endure His Light. Sadhu Sundar Singh, the great Indian Christian preacher, tells a story which illustrates this. He knew an Indian Christian who made great professions of holiness, but he was not what he seemed. One day he fell into a trance and woke to find himself in Heaven. There were the saints and martyrs whom he had wished to see, and, above all, there was Christ Himself. To his surprise, he began to feel unhappy. Everyone wore glistening white robes, and to his dismay, he saw that his

own robe was stained and dirty. He felt more and more uncomfortable and out of place. Then he covered his eyes so that he should not see his robe, and his thoughts assailed him. He knew that he was impure within, and unfit for that holy place. At last he could bear it no longer, and he fell at the Feet of Christ, and implored to be sent to Hell. His darkness was tormented by the radiance of Christ's Light.

The opening words of Christ were not addressed to the sufferer, but to the unseen power that troubled him. "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man!" Evidently the word of command added to the suffering of the man; the powers of evil were unwilling to quit their habitation, though they knew they must obey, and that their time was short. Quite probably the man was shaken by paroxysms of rage and fear, and, to recall him to himself, Our Lord asked him his name. A terrible answer was given: "Legion; for we are many." The soul of the unhappy man was a battle-ground for several contending powers of evil which were striving to express themselves through him. What wonder that he was violent, restless and desperately unhappy? The spread of spiritualism in these days is very dangerous, but it throws light for the Church upon the subject of possession. Possession is a very real fact. The Early Church knew this well, and used the powers which Christ had expressly left to her for dealing with this evil. There have been very many instances in modern days of people who dabbled in

spiritualism, and became possessed by evil spirits. These spirits are earth-bound; their attraction is downward and not upward, and they are anxious to enter into and use weak, negative people whose souls are not definitely placed under the protection of Christ. It is not enough for the soul to be "empty, swept and garnished," relying on its simplicity and good intentions. It is not safe if it goes into dangerous company such as is found at séances, meetings for automatic writings, etc., etc. There was an exceedingly interesting account lately in "The Living Church" of a case of possession for which exorcism was used. A woman let her house to some spiritualists who held séances there. When she came back to it, it seemed that she became possessed, not by one spirit, but by very many. For years this went on, and at last she consulted a priest, who came to the conclusion that it was a genuine case of possession. He used exorcism lasting for an hour and ten minutes, and not one but several spirits were driven from her. At the end of the time the woman was communicated for the protection of her soul, now set free, and though physically exhausted, she said she felt she was relieved of the horrible load she had borne for years, and now she was at peace. The priest who wrote the account ended by a strong denunciation of spiritualists and added: "May God keep all His people from such visitations and indwellings of the powers of darkness and evil and grant us, who are set apart for confounding Satan and all his works, light and power to dissipate

them and destroy their noxious and horrible activity."

The spirits that possessed the man of Gadara knew well that they must obey the command of Christ and leave the man they had tormented for so long. They made one request that they might be allowed to enter into a herd of swine which were feeding near by. They gave as their reason that they did not want to leave that countryside. They were earth-bound there. Christ gave them permission, and their entering into the swine led to the destruction of the whole herd. The animals rushed headlong down a steep cliff, and were drowned in the Lake. It was a very mysterious happening. Can it have been that Christ meant to break the attraction that bound those spirits to that part of the world by the violent destruction of their new habitation?

What concerns us most is the change that came over the man out of whom the evil spirits had been driven. He was absolutely transformed. When the owners of the herd came to see what had happened, they found their terrible neighbour "sitting at the Feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." No doubt, just as in the case of the woman whose cleansing has just been mentioned, peace and healing were flowing into his soul from this Holy Communion. When the men of Gadara, afraid of the effect of Christ's Presence, besought Him to depart from their coasts, the man made the very opposite request. He implored Our Lord that he might be allowed to stay with Him. Another

position was pointed out to him. He was to be the seed of the Church in that district. He to whom so much had been given, was to be a witness for Christ in his neighbourhood. He who had roamed so aimlessly among the mountains, now went everywhere throughout Decapolis, for the express purpose of telling what great things Christ had done for him.

The Woman with the Issue of Blood

"It was for my peace that I had great bitterness."
—Isaiah xxxviii. 17.

Read St. Luke viii. 43–48; St. Mark v. 25–34.

THIS is one of the miracles of Our Lord that has a very special characteristic—that of secrecy. In most of His recorded miracles Our Lord is represented as being fully aware of what was being done. The sick person comes to Him openly and asks for help, and openly, in the sight of the bystanders, the help is given. Most usually Our Lord conveyed this help by deliberately laying His Hands upon the sick person, speaking at the same time a few words.

In this miracle, however, there was a marked element of secrecy. The woman was furtive in her action, and Our Lord Himself bestowed the blessing which she sought without deliberation, and almost unawares. Commentators have found matter for blame in the furtiveness displayed by this poor woman, but surely a little deeper consideration will clear her of all guilt, by showing the peculiar circumstances of her case?

Try and picture the setting of the miracle. The actors in the scene easily divide into two. First of all there was Christ on His way to the bedside of Jairus' Daughter. We can picture the look of compassionate Love on His Face, and the swiftness with which He walked. We can imagine, too, how the Healing Power was gathering in Him ready to go forth for the healing of the body of the young girl that it might be a fit habitation for the spirit which He was to summon back into it.

Then there was the girl's father, Jairus. We can picture the anguished haste with which he led Our Lord to his house. His anxiety was desperate, and the slightest delay would seem to him insupportable. Then there was the crowd following to see whether the Prophet would be able to do another mighty work. They, no doubt, sympathised heartily with Jairus who was not only a father in deep distress, but a man of importance amongst them. Lastly there were Our Lord's special disciples, amongst whom the twelve were accustomed to making themselves into a kind of bodyguard round their Master, doing their best, sometimes rather roughly, to keep the people from thronging too closely round Him and asking help when He needed rest.

Over against this group was the solitary woman. She had no sympathising friends or relations to bring her to Our Lord, and to state her case for her. She was quite alone. Her condition was most pitiable. For twelve years she had suffered from a very exhausting physical trouble. Doctors could

do nothing for her. She had gone to one after another of them in vain. We can picture how her hopes would spring up when a new doctor was recommended, only to die down again. Her money had come to an end, for "she had spent all her living," so that the mental torture of wondering how to make both ends meet was added to her physical weakness. In addition to all this, she was counted by the Law of Moses ceremonially unclean. She had no business even to be in the crowd. Psychologists talk much about "complexes." What a complex this poor woman had who for twelve years had felt herself to be a pariah. Truly "the iron had entered into her soul."

In her extreme misery a light had sprung up for the miserable woman. "She had heard of the things concerning Jesus." She lived by the side of the Lake of Galilee, and quite probably she knew of the sick in Gennesaret who had been brought to Our Lord that they might just touch the border of His garment, and they had been healed (cf. St. Matthew xiv. 36). She could not ask permission to do this because of her peculiar disability, and in any case, the thronging crowd would make it almost impossible to attract Our Lord's attention. We can imagine the horrified indignation with which she would have been pushed aside by the crowd who sympathised with Jairus, if she had tried to attract attention to herself. Only one course was open to her, and that she took. She would try to get secretly what others had got openly. Her misery qualified her for help and she was full

of faith. "If I touch but His garments I shall be made whole." Surely they lack sympathetic insight who blame this poor sufferer for her stealth?

We can picture her movements; how she bent down and watched her opportunity, and suddenly put out her hand and touched Christ's robe. Immediately she was conscious that she was healed. Her relief and thankfulness must have been unbounded. In her heart she was no doubt glorifying and praising God, and meant to go to the priest to do all that Moses commanded, but, for the moment, "my secret to myself."

To the amazement of everyone, Christ stopped the procession. He had felt at once that a work of healing had taken place, for a real transference of power had been made. "Perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth," Christ turned round and asked: "Who touched My garments?" The multitude were surprised, and well they might be—Christ gives many surprises to those who walk with Him, there is no dullness in that pilgrimage—and St. Peter and the disciples gently pointed out the apparent absurdity of the question: "Master, the multitudes press Thee and crush Thee!" Christ by now was fully conscious that He had a patient who still needed help, and that she took precedence even of Jairus' dying child. With the unhurried deliberation of a good doctor, He turned round and pressed His question, "Who touched Me?"

We can imagine the dismay of the woman. She had to admit her action which was ceremoniously

incorrect; to state her physical trouble; and to bear with the indignation of the crowd for hindering Christ at this very critical moment. Again there was only one course open to her, and that she took. "The woman fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth."

> "Thy kind but searching Glance can scan
> The very wounds that shame would hide."

Now the healing of the woman was complete. She had been healed physically when by faith she touched the hem of Our Lord's garment, but more remained to be done. Her long years of shame, her repeated disappointments as doctor after doctor had failed to help her, the destitution with which she was now faced had all told upon her, and she was in urgent need of healing in her soul. Was it not for this reason that Christ drew her to confess her action? It was unspeakably painful to her, but as she confessed what she had done, how the compassionate Love of Our Lord must have flowed into her and healed her soul, so that she went away "every whit whole."

The question is often asked by those interested in Spiritual Healing: "Should those for whom we pray be told of what we are doing?" It is best, undoubtedly, to get the co-operation of the patient, but there are cases when the bodily condition is such that physical healing must precede that of the deeper healing of the soul. People in this condition are not fitted to co-operate with those

who pray for them, they will resist the very idea of it. The prayer of faith offered by their friends will bring about such a change in their dispositions that they are able to receive bodily healing, and after that will follow the deeper healing of the soul.

The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

"Oh tarry thou the Lord's leisure. Be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart."—Ps. xxvii. 16.

Read St. Matthew ix. 18–26; St. Mark v. 21 to the end of the chapter; St. Luke viii. 40 to the end of the chapter.

ONE special characteristic of this miracle is that it was intertwined with healing given to others. Not only was the little daughter of Jairus raised from the dead, but healing in the soul was given to her father, and on the way to her bedside, Our Lord healed the woman who touched the hem of His garment. The child was twelve years old, and, curiously enough, she was linked in healing with a woman whose infirmity had lasted twelve years.

First let us consider the setting of the miracle. Our Lord had just returned from a voyage to the other side of the Lake—the "desert side," to which He used to escape for periods of retirement. He had found no rest there this time, because he had been met by the man possessed by devils. After He had freed the man, the inhabitants of the district

had implored Him to leave their neighbourhood. Coming back to Capernaum, Christ not only found a welcoming crowd waiting for Him, but He was entreated to do a very urgent work of healing.

We can picture the scene. Our Lord was teaching "a great multitude" by the side of the Lake. Quite possibly He was seated in a boat in a little bay, and the multitude thronged the shores of the inlet. Behind Him lay the Lake, intensely blue and covered with boats; to His right stretched the hills on the desert side of the Lake, their delicate pink colour contrasting with the blue of the Lake, and in front of Him rose the magnificent white limestone buildings of Capernaum, conspicuous amongst them being the synagogue built by the centurion who had been attracted to the Jews' religion. The multitude was intent upon His words. We can imagine the stillness in which they sat, closely packed together.

Suddenly there was a disturbance. Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, forced his way through the crowd, and came up to Christ, and, prostrating himself before Him, entreated Him to come and heal his little daughter, whom, in Eastern hyperbole, he described as "even now dead." The father's distress was acute. A great deal has been written about the peculiar love of mothers for their sons, but there is often a very special bond between a father and his daughter. We think of Sir Thomas More praying for hours in his chapel when his dear daughter, Margaret Roper, was ill, and of Cromwell watching for weeks by the death-

bed of his daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, and thereby shortening his own life. Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue. No doubt he had been present when Christ preached in the synagogue and did a work of healing, quite possibly he knew the ruler of the synagogue at Nazareth who had heard Christ declare that He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, and was anointed to heal the sick, quite certainly Jairus had heard about the "mighty works" which Christ had done in Capernaum, and whether he had approved of Him or not before, in the hour of his great distress, he could think of no one else to help him. He therefore forced his way through the crowd, and, important man as he was, prostrated himself before the wonderful Carpenter from Nazareth. Urgent need breaks down all barriers.

Our Lord's response was instant. He went with Jairus, without delay, and His audience came with Him, no doubt full of sympathy, and looking forward to seeing some great work. It was to be a mightier work than had yet been seen in those parts, for the father's words of hyperbole proved to be literally true—the child was dead when they reached the house.

Jairus came to Our Lord seeking only healing for his daughter, but he himself received healing and strengthening which he little expected. He was looking to Our Lord with absolute faith, being convinced that only He could help him now, there was direct contact between his soul and the Soul of Our Lord. As he walked by the side of Our

Lord, the Peace of the Presence of Our Lord began to flood his soul and give him peace in spite of his grievous anxiety. Saint after saint has borne witness of the healing power of the Peace of Christ. Their outward circumstances may have been desperate, and yet this inward peace which came to them through the indwelling of Christ in their souls, gave them an unearthly joy and strength. Human reason cannot explain this peace, St. Paul simply describes it as "the Peace of God which passeth all understanding." Sadhu Sundar Singh, the well-known Indian mystic, speaks of this interior peace in his book, *At the Feet of the Master*. "Hope and experience will teach the unbeliever that joy follows pain, but *that* joy does not endure. But I give to My children ease *in* pain, and perfect happiness and peace."

This new-found strength in Jairus was soon put to the test. He had to learn the lesson that things were not to go according to his plan, but that Christ was in command of the whole situation. He was to be brought into brilliant light, but he had yet to pass through the dark night of the failure of his plans.

First came the interruption made by the woman who touched the hem of Our Lord's garment for healing. Jairus knew that delay might be fatal, and he had to endure this. Then came the message that he dreaded: "Thy daughter is dead. Trouble not the Master." His worst fears were realised, but new strength was given to him by Christ Whose Heart could enter as fully into his

anguish of disappointment as into the needs of the woman before Him. The words of Christ are always with power; they do what they say. When He turned to Jairus and said: "Fear not; only believe," His words brought an increase of peace to that troubled soul, and his faith was strengthened to receive the amazing gift of his daughter's resurrection from the dead. He was lifted to the plane of the supernatural.

When they reached the house there was not only the fact of death, but all the artificial exaggeration of grief which is characteristic of the East. Christ's words: "Weep not; for she is not dead, but sleepeth" were received with mockery and unbelief. It was not in such an atmosphere that He could do a mighty work. Only Peter, James and John, the three most spiritually advanced of the apostles, and the father and mother of the child were allowed to be present. No doubt Jairus had been with his wife, soothing her and imparting some of his newfound strength and confidence to her, so that she was fitted to add her contribution of faith to that of the others.

Then came the miracle. When Elisha raised the Shunammite's son from the dead, the work was protracted, but a greater than Elisha was there. Taking the child by the hand, and speaking gently but with authority, Our Lord called back the spirit that had gone, and the child at once rose up and walked.

The immediate effect of the miracle was almost stupefying. "They were amazed straightway with

a great amazement." Perhaps the shock of extreme joy might have been too much for Jairus, if he had not had the strengthening that Christ had given him as he walked by his side. The child had died of a disease, and in raising her from the dead, Christ had healed the body which the spirit was once more to inhabit. The body needed sustenance, a fact which, in their bewildered joy, the parents were overlooking, until reminded by Christ: "Give her something to eat."

The Syro-Phœnician Woman's Daughter

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days."
—Heb. xi. 30.

Read St. Matthew xv. 22–29; St. Mark vii. 24–30.

THE outstanding characteristics of this miracle are that it was a work of healing done at a distance, and, secondly, that the mother of the child who was healed gained her petition after several rebuffs.

The setting of the miracle differed from that of most of the recorded miracles of Our Lord, because it was done outside Judæa and Galilee. The scribes and Pharisees, in pursuance of their commission from headquarters at Jerusalem, had been pressing Our Lord to find capital matter against Him. Christ, knowing that His Ministry was not yet fulfilled, judged it wise to withdraw from Galilee for a time, into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. A reckless exposure of Himself to danger in reliance upon supernatural help was one of the temptations which

Our Lord had met and overcome in the wilderness. He therefore took the precaution of withdrawing from a threatened danger, and in this new district went into a house to lodge, giving orders that His arrival should be kept secret. St. Mark's comment is: "But He could not be hid." Wherever the Great Healer came He attracted the sick and troubled. It has been remarked that men, whatever their religious opinions may be, when they are in very great trouble instinctively cry out: "God help me!" This is a cry from the heart, not from the intellect; it is the deep calling to the deep. Christ Who was One with the Father, had come into the prosperous districts of Tyre and Sidon, and though the True God was not worshipped there, but the god of this world, yet there was waiting for Him a woman whose misery and despair were to lead her to gain both faith and healing from the True God.

The Syro-Phœnician woman found out that the Great Healer from Galilee was in the neighbourhood. No doubt some travelling merchant who had heard Him and seen His miracles in Galilee, had spread the news of Him. The man had seen wonderful things done; the blind had received their sight, the lame had walked, the lepers had been cleansed, and devils had been cast out. The woman was in great distress. Her little daughter, who should have been such a source of pride and joy to her, was the very reverse. The child did not seem to be her child at all; her personality was submerged by another personality, for she was possessed.

Psycho-analysts talk very glibly about the subject of possession, denying that it is a fact, but missionaries and priests who have worked in countries where the powers of darkness have great sway, know that possession by an alien influence may be a great reality, and that persons who are under that influence are literally "not themselves," they are repugnant and terrifying to those around them, and when through the power of exorcism in the Name of Christ, the alien influence is cast out, the man or woman is obviously a changed being.

The Early Church fearlessly used exorcism in the Name of Christ. The story is told by St. Jerome of St. Hilarion, a fourth-century hermit in Palestine, that a man was brought to him who was possessed of the devil. The devil began to speak through the man, making excuses for his action. "I care not," cried Hilarion sharply, "how you came to enter, I now command you, in the Name of our Lord Jesus, to come out of him." The devil came out and the man was instantly set free. This is no strange tale, magnified by the mists of antiquity; those who know of the wonders done in the present day, through exorcism in the Name of Christ, recognise that it has the stamp of absolute truth. The Lord does indeed "loose men out of captivity," out of a spiritual bondage which is far worse than any physical imprisonment.

The Syro-Phœnician woman, although not a Jewess, addressed Our Lord by an exclusively Jewish title: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou

Son of David." There was a sound of unreality about her words, it was as if a Buddhist, in order to win a favour from a Christian should speak of Christ as "Our Lord." The woman's grief was real enough, but there was something artificial in her method of expression. The Heart of Christ could not but have been responsive to the woman's deep need, but for the purging of her soul and the deepening of her faith, "He answered her not a word." The woman then seems to have became clamorous, for the disciples, annoyed at the disturbance she was making, came to Our Lord and implored Him to use His Authority. "Send her away; for she crieth after us." No doubt they had already used their powers of persuasion and command to dismiss her, without effect. The woman persisted. Disregarding the disciples, she kept her attention fixed upon their Master.

Then came her first bit of victory. Our Lord broke His silence, but His words were not encouraging: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Outcast though she knew she was, the woman was not deterred by these words; she came nearer still, and prostrating herself at Our Lord's Feet, she cried: "Lord, help me!" Repellent though Christ's words sounded, who can doubt but that His heart was yearning over this poor woman? Her faith was to be the instrument of her daughter's healing, and it needed to be clarified and strengthened. The woman had, no doubt, been brought up to follow the Baal worship which was prevalent in that district.

Her mind would be full of ideas of propitiation of offended deities by costly offerings and cruel sacrifices, she had to learn of Him Who was meek and lowly of heart, that utter humility was the essential condition of great spiritual gain. Our Lord, Who could see right into the soul of that woman, watched the growth of her faith, and the very seeming rebuffs that He gave her were only meant to strengthen her faith. A parallel to this is found in one method of massage. When the masseur wants to help a crippled limb, he will encourage the patient to use the limb by opposing his use of it by nicely calculated resistance. The patient gradually, by resisting this opposition, increases in strength, and recovers the use of his limb.

The answer to the piteous cry: "Lord help me!" must have sounded harsh and discouraging. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." The Eastern dog is not the friendly companion of man that it is in the West, it is a scavenger of the streets—useful, but repulsive and unclean. The poor woman, no doubt, at once felt the sting of the reproach. She was not one of the chosen people, she was an outcast and unclean; but her little daughter needed help, so, with utter detachment, thinking nothing of her own wounded pride, she meekly answered: "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." The woman's absolute humility and persistence had won the day; the flower of her faith was in full bloom. As she lay there prostrate at Christ's Feet, no doubt a spiritual

conviction began to dawn in her that her prayer was answered. She was in close spiritual touch with Our Lord, and though outwardly His dealings with her had seemed hard, yet inwardly He was drawing her closer and closer to Himself all the time. The Great Healer had taken what faith the woman could offer, and had increased it until it was sufficient to be the channel for the healing of her daughter.

This miracle helps us to answer the question that is so often raised: "Why at missions of Christian Healing, are the heathen often healed, and many Christians left unhealed?" God is not a hard taskmaster Who expects what people cannot possibly give Him. He takes the whole faith that the suppliant is able to offer, but the offering must be pure. For this reason many a heathen who comes in his simplicity offers a simpler faith than many "Gospel-hardened" Christians, and receives a greater blessing.

Then came the words for which the Syro-Phœnician woman had been longing: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Her daughter was healed and she herself received the high commendation: "O woman, great is thy faith!" Not only was the child set free, but the mother, who had suffered so much through her, had received the gift of faith.

St. Jerome, writing about his famous convert, Paula, uses words which are surely applicable to this Syro-Phœnician woman. "Her lowliness surpassed all others in virtue; while least among all,

she was greater than all. The more she cast herself down, the more she was lifted up by Christ. By shunning glory, she earned glory, for glory follows virtue as its shadow, and, deserting those who seek it, it seeks those who despise it."

The Woman of Samaria

"The Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple."—MAL. iii. 1.

Read ST. JOHN iv. 1–4.

OUR LORD was upon a journey from the Jordan valley to Galilee. It was a journey forced upon Him by the threatening attitude of the Pharisees at Jerusalem who were alarmed at the increasing influence of the new teacher from the north. Multitudes had been flocking to receive His baptism in the Jordan. St. John the Baptist's prophecy: "He must increase, but I must decrease," had come true, for more asked baptism of Christ in those days than of His great forerunner. It seemed as if this new teaching, so subversive in the eyes of the Pharisees, of the Law of Moses, was taking a strong hold of the people. Christ knew of the growing alarm and opposition of His enemies, and He knew also that "His hour had not yet come," so He withdrew from Judæa and went back to Galilee.

His way lay through the district of Samaria. Not far from Samaria itself, and before He reached

the city of Sychar, was Jacob's well, a holy place both to the Jews and to the Samaritans. It was mid-day, and the dust and glare of the roads, together with the hurried travelling from the hot, low-lying Jordan valley into the hill country, combined with we know not what of spiritual weariness due to long vigils and constant wrestling with the powers of evil, had overtired the chief traveller. He sat down by the well to rest, whilst His disciples pushed on to Sychar to get food. As Our Lord sat there, no doubt His thoughts travelled to Jacob who once fled from his native land, and came back at the head of a great company. He had been lonely and weary, and yet, in the end, he had become the father of many people. Our Blessed Lord is True Man as well as True God, He could feel and suffer from the burden of His work in His human body, and could be encouraged by the experiences of the saints of His nation.

Suddenly a new piece of work was given to Our Lord, and, physically tired as He was, He did it in virtue of a strength that came from no human source. Food and drink were still lacking, but His Spirit transcended the weakness of His mortal Body, and was strong to do the work which now presented itself.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water at the well. We can picture her coming along the hot, dusty road from Sychar, her earthenware pitcher balanced on her head, upright and treading firmly, her thoughts free to wander, little thinking of what an important expedition she was making,

and how differently she would return from the well.

At the well the woman found a man sitting alone. The absence of the disciples had made a God-prepared solitude for her. In silence, she began to lower her vessel into the deep well, and was startled to hear the stranger ask for a drink of water. "Give Me to drink." It was not usual for an Eastern man to talk to a solitary woman, and, moreover, the stranger was by his dress a Jew to whom the Samaritans were outcasts. Surprised as the woman was, she would have been amazed at the deep mystic signification which attached to the stranger's words. He was thirsting for more than earthly water. He saw in her a need which He only could satisfy, and by a great mystery, He knew that she could quench His Own thirst in a way she little dreamed.

"His are the thousand sparkling rills
That from a thousand fountains burst,
And fill with music all the hills;
And yet He saith: 'I thirst!'

. . . . .

But more than pains that racked Him then
Was the deep longing thirst divine
That thirsted for the souls of men;
Dear Lord! and one was mine."

Evidently this Samaritan woman had an active, inquiring mind. Instead of complying with this very natural request from a thirsty stranger, she questioned him: "How is it that thou, being a Jew,

askest drink of me, which am a Samaritan woman?" Little though she knew it, her apparently idle questioning was being guided by the Holy Spirit for her salvation and that of many in her city. The answer which she received was so amazing that, like Nicodemus in his midnight talk with Christ, she answered in an almost puerile way, and asked how the stranger could give water when he had nothing to draw with. "Living water" conveyed nothing to her as yet, but it seems as though she was beginning to realise that the stranger might be someone remarkable, for she questioned him: "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" The Samaritans, as well as the Jews, had a deep reverence for the great patriarchs, and they, too, looked for the coming of the Messiah. Scorned as her people were by the Jews, and doubly an outcast because of her sinful life, yet this woman had spiritual yearnings which the Eye of Christ detected. Who else would have given this deeply mystical teaching to a sinful woman? Christ would not quench this smoking flax, He meant to make of her a bright light in His Church. His piercing Eye saw in her not only sin, but also a capacity for receiving spiritual instruction, and for doing mission work.

There was a restlessness of spirit in this woman which Christ, the Healer, diagnosed. Many flagrant sinners, outwardly hardened against God, are inwardly longing for the highest spiritual things. They are full of energy that has been misdirected, and however brazen they may seem they are really

miserable. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until we find Thee."

This "living water," Our Lord explained, would satisfy those who drank of it for ever. It would be, as it were, a private well in themselves. This was a strange saying to the woman. She took it to mean some magical potion which a great wonder-worker could administer. Was it possible that this stranger could give her an inexhaustible supply of water that would save her in the future from her wearisome journeys to the well?

Meanwhile the Eye of Christ was reading her through and through. He could see the inward effect of His words upon her, and knew that, before the true light could dawn upon her, the darkness caused by sin must be expelled. Suddenly, like a thunderclap, He called her sin to remembrance by speaking of her sinful life. She attempted very little defence when Christ brushed aside her quibble: "I have no husband." Evidently He spoke to her much about her sinful past, although St. John gives few details, for she declared afterwards that Christ had told her all that she had ever done. This complete arraignment, followed, no doubt, by hearty repentance, was the healing of the soul of this woman. This was the mighty work that Our Lord was drawn to do as He waited by Jacob's well. Tired as He was physically, He carried out the Will of God for this soul, with matchless skill awakening, probing, healing, and teaching.

Some time in the course of the conversation,

the woman pointed to Mount Gerazim, clearly seen from Jacob's well, and asked Our Lord about the vexed question of local worship. Surely they are mistaken who see in this an attempt to turn the conversation? Christ would never have "cast pearls before swine" by answering a flippant question with deep mystical teaching. The woman's words were symptomatic of the restless questioning of her eager, unsatisfied, inquiring nature. In a few words Our Lord answered her. The Jews were right, the Samaritans were wrong, for "Salvation is from the Jews," but the time was coming when local worship would be abolished, and a true, spiritual worship would be offered to God everywhere.

The Samaritan woman was learning more and more about the stranger. He was not merely an unconventional, thirsty traveller, he was a prophet whose opinion about religion was worth listening to. The high teaching about true worship brought her still further. Reverently, she declared her belief in the coming of the Messiah. "I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ), when He is come He will declare unto us all things." She was now ready for full illumination. The veil was withdrawn, and suddenly the words were spoken which brought conviction: "I that speak unto thee am He."

Meanwhile the disciples had returned, and were watching the scene with awed astonishment. Much as they were surprised to see their Master talking alone with a woman, they said nothing. An angelic

guard was surely round Christ and His new disciple. Still more surprised must they have been to see her forget her errand, leave her waterpot, and hurry off to the village. The empty waterpot at the Feet of Christ was a true symbol of the soul waiting to be filled with the water of life which He alone could give.

When the woman had gone, the disciples ventured to speak to their Master, urging Him to take some food. To their surprise, He refused. By law of spiritual compensation, He had Himself been refreshed both in body and soul, as He ministered to the woman. In doing the Will of His Father He had brought healing to the soul of the Samaritan, and this had been to Him the truest meat and drink. When the Church does her full part in this work of spiritual healing, she will herself receive a great increase of vigour.

Meanwhile the woman had brought the news of Christ to Sychar. She proved an excellent missionary. Some believed because of her testimony, others because they came out to the well and saw and heard for themselves. Urged by His new disciples, Christ stayed two days at Sychar and left many there believing in His claim to be the Healer of the world. In vision He had already foreseen this harvest of souls, and a greater harvest still. He bade His disciples pray that many reapers might be sent out to get in that harvest. Who can doubt that this Samaritan woman continued to be a missionary, and that she became a channel of living water to many a thirsty soul?

"O God, with Whom is the well of life, and in Whose light we see light, increase in us, we beseech Thee, the brightness of Divine knowledge, whereby we may be able to reach Thy plenteous fountain; impart to our thirsting souls the draught of life, and restore to our darkened minds the light from Heaven."

The Epileptic Boy

"That ye may know the exceeding greatness of His Power to us-ward who believe."—EPH. i. 18–19.

Read ST. MATT. xvii. 14–20; ST. MARK ix. 14–29.

THE healing of the epileptic boy followed immediately upon Our Lord's Transfiguration. Fra Angelico, untroubled by perspective, has tried to show in one picture the contrasting scenes on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration and at the foot. On the mountain Our Lord stands in glory, His Arms outstretched, with Moses and Elijah listening reverently to His words. At the foot of the mountain there are shown a confused crowd, and a boy writhing in agony. People of spiritual experience tell us that it very often does happen that after a time of great peace and spiritual upliftment, they find themselves plunged into the very reverse conditions, and they are called upon to do a difficult piece of work for God.

As Our Lord came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, talking to His awe-struck disciples of what they had just witnessed, He found His other nine disciples in difficulties. They were surrounded by a multitude of people amongst whom

were scribes who were pressing them with questions. The appearance of Christ caused a great sensation. St. Mark notes that the multitude was "greatly amazed." Can it have been because the Blessed Face was still shining with something of the light that had transfigured It upon the mountain? If Moses' face shone from the contemplation of God, how much more must the blazing forth of the Light of the Godhead of Christ have continued to illuminate His Face even after the Transfiguration had passed? The awe-struck multitude ran to meet Our Lord and saluted Him. There was great need for His Presence.

Our Lord went at once to the help of His distressed disciples. "What question ye with them?" He asked the scribes. The disciples were simple, unlearned people, their brains were no match for the subtleties of the scribes. Before the scribes could answer, one of the crowd explained the difficulty. He had brought his son for healing. No doubt he sought for Christ Himself, but finding Him absent, He had approached His disciples, and their efforts to help had been in vain. The disciples must have felt and looked ashamed and downcast, and the pertinacious questioning of the scribes, the comments of the people, and, above all, the distress of the father, must have added very much to their embarrassment. Once more, so to speak, they had been toiling in rowing, on a dark night, before their Lord had come to them.

The father's account of his son was heartrending. He suffered from a form of epilepsy due to possession.

The evil spirit so afflicted the child as to cause both dumbness and deafness. At times the spirit assaulted the boy and dashed him down, causing him to foam and grind his teeth, and to waste away. The attacks resembled the symptoms of epilepsy, but they were more serious. The child seemed to be malignantly controlled. At times the spirit acted as though it wanted to take the boy's life, for it threw him into the fire or into the water. The father ended by saying that the disciples had not been able to drive out the spirit. Our Lord must have felt horror at this manifestation of evil more acutely than ever after His recent experiences on the mount. His disciples had failed for want of spiritual power; they had not looked straight up to God with unwavering faith, they had been distracted by self-confidence and regard for the opinions of other men. Time after time they had proved weak when they should have been strong. "O faithless generation," exclaimed Our Lord, "how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" A story is told of St. Anthony of the Desert that a brother hermit once complained to him that a wicked spirit would not let him do good to his neighbour. "Oh," said Anthony who knew much about wrestling with the powers of evil, "don't speak so, lest you charge Our Lord with being untrue to His word, for He has said: 'Behold I have given you power.' It is your want of goodwill you ought to accuse, and not the evil spirits."

Disciples may fail from want of faith, and the Church also, but their Lord is infallible. "Bring

him unto Me," said the Great Healer to the father. The boy's release was close at hand, but the evil spirit, knowing that his time was short, broke into a paroxysm of violence as soon as he was brought to Christ. The lad was torn and thrown upon the ground and lay there foaming. Looking at the dreadful sight, Christ questioned the father: "How long time is it since this hath come unto him?" There was sympathy in that question, and, we may say it with reverence, the scientific interest of a great doctor. "From a child," answered the father. He must have suffered terribly, as well as his son. "If Thou canst do anything," he went on, "have compassion on us, and help us." He did not mean to be insulting, but he was so in ignorance. There is no need to stir Christ's Compassion, that is never wanting, and His Power to help is limitless. "If thou canst!" Christ caught up the words and repeated them with pained surprise. His Power was not limited, what was limited was the capacity of the asker to receive. "All things are possible to him that believeth!" Surely this was more than a statement, was it not a spur to the father's faith, an "enabling word" of Our Lord creating the faith that it described?

The effect of Christ's words were immediate, for at once the distracted father cried out: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" The words seem strange and contradictory, and yet they are very true in spiritual experience. With our deepest self we see and understand things of the spirit and proclaim our knowledge almost involuntarily, whilst

our everyday self halts behind and cannot rise to these heights. St. John the Baptist, for instance, proclaimed with swift spiritual insight, that Christ was the Lamb of God, yet afterwards, when the vision had passed and his outward conditions had changed, he wavered, and sent from his prison to ask for proofs of Christ's Messiahship.

The colloquy between Our Lord and the father had taken some time, and meanwhile a curious crowd was quickly gathering together. This made Christ hasten to set the child free. He had the support of the faith of the father and the sympathy and confident faith of His Own disciples; under these conditions a mighty work could be done, and it would be well to hasten before the excitement of an inquisitive crowd disturbed the spiritual atmosphere. Turning then to the evil spirit, Our Lord used strong words of exorcism: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him!" The evil spirit obeyed, crying out and rending the child with one last burst of malignity. The child lay exhausted, so that many declared that he was dead. The Hand of Christ, however, raised him up, and all the ravages of evil upon his exhausted body were healed by that life-giving Touch. "God is Life, and can give to her," said St. Teresa when she once prayed for a sick nun. The child who had been the prey of powers of evil for so long was now completely restored. His soul was freed and protected by the Power of Christ, and his body was healed and reinvigorated.

The honour of the Name of Christ was vindicated by this miracle of healing. His disciples had failed because, as He afterwards told them privately, they were not strong enough in prayer. Those who in Christ's Name undertake to wrestle with the powers of evil put themselves in the forefront of the battle, and draw down upon themselves the heaviest attacks of the powers of darkness. Only those who use the "weapon of all-prayer," and who are clothed in the "armour of light" can do battle successfully against such foes. Because the fight is hard, though, it is not to be avoided. The Church has a definite commission from her Master to cast out evil spirits, and there are many strongholds of evil which await her attack. After Missions of Healing which were recently held in churches and cathedrals throughout India, it was reported that the Name of Jesus was spoken of with respect throughout the bazaars. There had been many cases of exorcism. Evil spirits had gone out when commanded to do so in the Name of Jesus. The Indians knew that the names of Buddha or Mahomet would not have had such potency, and they did honour to the Name of Jesus. May the Church show forth more and more the power of that Saving Name.

NOTE.

The Early Church used exorcism in the Name of Christ freely. No other Name, however holy, has power. This is illustrated by a story of St. Paul the Simple, one of the hermits of the Egyptian desert, and a close disciple of St. Anthony. St. Paul the Simple was a man of much prayer, and to him had been given the gift of casting out spirits of evil. The story tells that

one day a man possessed by a devil was brought to St. Anthony. St. Anthony said that he had no gift of casting out spirits, that grace had not been given him by the Holy Spirit, and he sent the man to St. Paul.

St. Paul first prayed, and then said: "Get thee out of the man, Father Anthony says you must go." The devil refused to go, and abused both St. Paul and St. Anthony. Then St. Paul said: "If thou dost not go out, I will go and tell Jesus Christ, and it will be the worse for thee." The devil only blasphemed the Holy Name. Then St. Paul went away and prayed, saying he would neither eat nor drink until the Lord answered his prayer and cast out the devil. Thereupon the devil, with many cries and protestations, came out of the man.

The Man Born Blind

"They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces shall never be confounded."—Ps. xxxiv. 5. (R.V.)

Read St. John ix.

OUR LORD and His disciples were walking about Jerusalem during the Feast time, and their attention was attracted by a blind beggar. No doubt he was particularly vociferous, as there was every hope that the great crowd of pilgrims that filled the city just then might feel more charitably disposed than usual to give alms to beggars. The man seems not only to have asked alms, but to have recited his story. He told them that he was born blind. Blindness in the East is fairly common. The disciples do not seem to have been moved to pity, they merely speculated about why the man was so much afflicted. The rabbis, like Job's comforters, saw in a great affliction such as blindness, the vengeance of Heaven for sin committed. The disciples questioned their Master as to whose the sin was—the man's or his parents'. Our Lord, meanwhile, was looking at the man from quite a different point of view. The prevalence

of blindness did not blunt His sympathy for each individual blind man; His Heart was touched, and He knew that the gift of sight was to be given to this man, although he had not asked for it. During the time of the Feast, Christ had proclaimed that He was the Light of the world; now, brushing aside His followers' speculations about the cause of this particular case of blindness, He declared that in this man God was to be glorified—that was his strange vocation, for this he had borne so long the privation of light. As the Scotch Catechism so nobly states: "Man's chief end is to glorify God."

Faith is essential to every miracle of Christ. Reverently we may say: "It takes two to make a miracle—God and the one to whom the miracle is done." God never showers His greatest gifts down upon unwilling receivers. The blind man had no means of knowing that the Great Healer was speaking to him, he therefore could not ask for the gift of sight, but he had to show his faith by willingness to co-operate with Christ, however extraordinary His commands were. The blind have an acute sense of touch. Christ appealed to this by covering the man's eyes with clay which He Himself had prepared. The man submitted to this, but healing did not come instantly. His faith was put to a further test. He was told to make his way down into the valley which lies at the foot of the hills on which Jerusalem is built, and to wash the plaster off at the Pool of Siloam. His implicit obedience showed that he was in the right attitude towards Christ. By faith he was

looking straight up to Him, and he would not be put to shame, however foolish his actions might appear outwardly.

Apparently Christ waited for the return of the beggar, for the account says that he "came seeing," as if those who had watched the man start on his journey of faith, going cautiously and feeling his way, saw his jubilant return. Christ seems to have told him His Name, and then, perhaps, He withdrew Himself quickly from the gathering crowds.

A painful ordeal now lay before the beggar which was to try his patience and to cost him something. First of all his neighbours questioned him. They were so much astonished at his recovery of his sight that some doubted his identity. When he had convinced them of that, he had to recite in detail the story of his healing, but when questioned as to the whereabouts of Jesus, he could only say: "I know not." The people knew that a great wonder had been done, but they doubted whether it was altogether satisfactory, because it had been done on a Sabbath Day. The beggar might have been receiving favours from the Evil One. To settle the question, they brought him to the Pharisees. Once again he had to describe the process by which he had received his sight, and he had to listen to a discussion between the Pharisees about the orthodoxy of his Healer. Asked of his own opinion, the beggar declared that Christ must be a prophet—a great one, whom God used as an intermediary between Himself and His people. So angered at last did the Jews become that they

threw doubt upon his whole story, and sent for his parents to corroborate it. The parents were too frightened to do more than testify that he was their son and that he was born blind, they left it to him to declare how he had been healed.

The beggar was a true witness to Christ by simply sticking to his story and refusing to be browbeaten. He did not yet know the full dignity of his Healer, but he stood up for Him to the best of his power. The story is most vividly told, and the man played his part with a touch of true beggar's impudence. When adjured by God to admit that his Healer was a sinner, he merely reiterated the fact that to him was absolutely true—once he was blind, now he could see. When reviled by the Pharisees, he carried the war into their country. They held by Moses, a great man indeed, but so was his Healer. The very fact that He had done this stupendous miracle proved that He was a good man, and one whom God heard. "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." The beggar in his simplicity, was stating the very essential element of Christ's Power. It was because He was absolutely One with the Father that He did the Will of God in perfection. Beaten in argument, although they would not admit it, the Pharisees declared the beggar excommunicate in accordance with their decision that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ, should be cast out of the synagogue. Unwittingly, in the simple honesty and gratitude of his heart, the beggar was suffering as a confessor of Christ. A peculiar benediction was his. Blessed

are ye when they cast you out of the synagogues for My Name's sake." His was the blessedness, too, of being allowed to make some little return for the healing which Christ had given him.

The news of the punishment of the beggar was brought to Christ, and He sought him out in his disgrace. The man had been tested both in his faith and constancy and stood firm; to him who had much more was to be given. His Healer stood before him once more, and asked whether he believed on the Son of God. Humbly, in great contrast to his familiarity in speaking to the Pharisees, the man asked: "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Then came the stupendous revelation, the great spiritual fact that can only be apprehended by the spirit: "Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that speaketh with thee!" Earthly sight had first been given to the beggar, now the far greater gift of spiritual vision was given to him. Prostrating himself at the Feet of Christ, he made his response: "Lord, I believe."

The story is told of Probus, a martyr who suffered in the persecution of Diocletian, that when his tormentor thrust out his eyes, he exclaimed: "You have taken away my bodily eyes, but O most cruel tyrant, I defy you to deprive me of the sight of God. If thou knewest the darkness that was in thee, most ungodly man, thou wouldst call me blessed." Commenting on the case of this beggar, Our Lord declared that spiritual perception of His claims was the measure of a man's true sight. The Pharisees, with their eyes fixed upon their own

interpretations of the Law of Moses, thought that they were spiritually enlightened, and refused any other light, but only those who admitted their blindness and sought for light would be drawn to the Light of the world.

A point that often comes up in connection with spiritual Healing is illustrated by the story of this miracle. People ask whether sickness is not in itself a good thing because, so often, good comes out of it. "This beggar's blindness, for example," they say, "was a blessing in disguise, because it attracted to him the notice and healing of Christ." There is confusion of thought here. Sickness in itself can never be anything but evil; it is a contradiction of the perfection of God's creation, which, before it was marred by sin, God pronounced to be "very good." Good does come out of sickness sometimes, for God by His grace, brings good out of evil. By an exact parallel, good may come from sin, when a sinner, through hearty repentance, becomes at last a saint; but sin is not therefore to be reckoned good. Another point in connection with Spiritual Healing that is illustrated by this miracle is that the bodily healing of the beggar preceded his spiritual illumination. With some the process is reversed. They learn very deeply of spiritual truths before bodily healing is given them, and, looking back after their healing, they declare that they are thankful for every day that they suffered, so many were the spiritual lessons that they were taught in the waiting time. With others

the case is reversed; they come to Christ thinking chiefly of their bodily needs. Physical healing is given to them, and then follows spiritual illumination. The Great Physician varies His methods of treatment.

The Man with the Dropsy

"He brought me also out of the horrible pit; out of the mire and clay——. He hath put a new song in my mouth; even a thanksgiving unto our God."

—Ps. xl. 2, 3.

Read St. Luke xiv. 2–6.

THE setting of this miracle differs from that of most of the recorded miracles of Our Lord because it was done in a hostile atmosphere. Usually Our Lord performed His miracles in the presence of a friendly multitude, or of a little group of sympathising friends who had brought their sick to Him, full of faith and love. In this case, however, apart from His own disciples, who in all probability, were with Him, Our Lord was in the midst of hostile critics.

He was having a meal in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees, and it was the Sabbath Day. Could there be a greater contrast than there was between the host and the Guest? The one hidebound by the Law of Moses, punctilious in keeping every point of it, going beyond its actual commands in any case of doubt, and very carefully

observant of the teaching of the rabbis. The Other was in the eyes of the Pharisees a dangerous influence. He came from the despised Nazareth, was one of the "common people" who "knew not the Law," and yet He had an enormous following. His teaching was unorthodox, He made no attempt to keep in line with the teaching of the rabbis, but spoke with authority like one of the great prophets to whom the word of the Lord came. The miracles wrought by Christ were another count against Him in the eyes of the Pharisees. They added weight to His authority, but as they challenged the dignity of the Pharisees as the religious leaders of the people, they, to save their position, felt obliged to discredit them. Undoubtedly, admitted the Pharisees, great wonders had been done, blind men could now see, lame walked, deaf heard, &c.—but let the people be careful that they were not getting gifts from Beelzebub. So blind were the Pharisees to everything except their own importance, that they literally called light darkness, and were losing all power to recognise goodness when they saw it.

This was the hostile atmosphere that surrounded Our Lord at that meal. He Who loved the peace of the friendly house at Bethany, must have been acutely sensitive to such a hostile atmosphere, for He was conscious of the evil power behind which was using the bigotry of the Pharisees as an instrument of attack upon Himself. "Odium theologicum" is a sentiment by itself, a specially venomous form of hatred. In reading accounts of religious

controversies we are often appalled by the violence of the opponents. Surely the explanation is that the enemy of mankind who is against all spiritual progress, tries to gain his ends by bringing into play passions such as jealousy, arrogance and the like, whilst the combatants are deceived into thinking that they are full of pure zeal for the truth?

It was the Sabbath Day, a day on the observance of which the Pharisees prided themselves. The host and his friends watched Christ, fairly certain that they would find Him transgressing their code and so get matter "whereof to accuse Him." Could there have been a greater contrast at the same table? Narrowness, suspicion and concealed hatred were on the one hand; love and power on the other.

There was a third element present at that feast. A man came in who was afflicted with the dropsy. He seems to have been an uninvited guest, one of the onlookers who, according to Eastern custom, might watch what was going on at a private entertainment. Undoubtedly he had heard of the fame of Christ. Probably he had never before had a chance of seeing Him. Although it was the Sabbath Day, and he knew well the strict opinions of the master of the house about the observance of that day, he braved his displeasure, hoping that the Great Healer might be moved to help him. Apparently the sick man dared make no verbal appeal to Our Lord. He just ranged himself as far as possible opposite Him and waited. Is not this silent appeal the attitude of countless sufferers in the present

day? They have heard of the miracles of Christ, and that He commissioned His Church to go on with His work of healing—"they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover"—St. Mark xvi. 18.—their illness is beyond the power of doctors, who brand them incurable, and they wait in silent misery, eyeing the Church in desperate hope.

Above all the babel of talk, across all the currents of scorn, suspicion and hate, Christ heard the cry of the sick man's heart, and felt the influence of his strong desire. His case was very pitiable. Those afflicted with dropsy suffer from marked depression, so that a cheerful, active faith was exceedingly difficult to the man. We can picture him, with his unwieldy body, perhaps propped up against a wall opposite to Our Lord, fixing his sad eyes on Him in pathetic silence and mute appeal.

Instantly Our Lord was moved with compassion. Who doubt but that strong radiations of love went straight from His Blessed Heart into the heart of this poor man, warming him, and encouraging him, and strengthening his faith to receive the great gift that was to come to him? It is characteristic of Spiritual Healing that, unseen in its operations, it begins in silence some time before there are outward signs that the sick person is receiving such healing. Sudden miracles of healing may and do occur, but, generally speaking, those who are healed through spiritual means, know that they have gone through a long process of spiritual preparation before their faith is strong enough to be the channel of

this grace of healing. Even those who are miraculously and as we, in our blindness, judge instantaneously healed, must have been spiritually prepared for their sudden release. There is a parallel between the spiritual healing of the body and the conversion of the soul. Some are instantaneously converted, with most, conversion is a gradual process.

Apparently without a word to the sick man, Our Lord turned to speak to the scribes and Pharisees who were watching eagerly to see whether He would fall into this trap, and break the Sabbath by working. He answered their thoughts by the question: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" They held their peace. Christ's Authority overawed them. They could not stand a frontal attack from Him. Then, in the peace which He had secured, the work of healing was done. Christ "took him, and healed him, and let him go." The terse description is most vivid. We see the man drawn to the side of Christ, coming painfully and slowly; then comes the touch of the Healer, the laying of His Hands upon the weakened heart; and then the dismissal, no doubt with the words: "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee." "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth: even a thanksgiving unto our God." The Jews knew their Psalms by heart. Some such expression as this must have filled the heart of the man as he left the house, so fully restored. Instead of depression, he was filled with joy, and for his weary, cumbersome body he had a body full of lightness and vigour.

Once more Christ turned with a legal question to His critics, meeting them on the very ground where they felt themselves most secure. "Which of you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath Day?" All their defences were turned, and they could make no answer.

The Ten Lepers

"I was sore troubled. . . . What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? . . . I will pay my vows now, in the presence of all His people."

—Ps. cxvi. 10, 11, 13.

Read St. Luke xvii. 11–19.

THE cleansing of the ten lepers was one of the miracles done by Our Lord as He journeyed. St. Peter once summed up his Master's work on earth in the words: "He went about doing good." No doubt he remembered very vividly those journeys throughout Palestine when the Presence of Christ was so often the signal for the arrival of the sick and afflicted of every kind. To use a modern expression, the "reaction" of the arrival of Christ into a new place was most remarkable. He attracted sufferers like a magnet. People are sensitive about exposing their troubles—skeletons are kept in cupboards—but when the presence of love and sympathy are felt, it is astonishing how quickly sufferings are brought to light. At recent

missions of Christian Healing when literally thousands of the sick were brought into cathedrals and churches to receive Christ's Healing Touch, the processions of sufferers amazed the onlookers. "Why, I did not know that there was so much sickness in the town," was a frequent remark.

On the occasion of this miracle, Christ was passing through a village either in Galilee or Samaria. At the entrance of the village He was met by a band of ten lepers. Their terrible disease made it impossible for them to come near. All they could do was to stand at a distance and implore help. They cried loudly: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" No doubt they had heard about the cleansing of other lepers. Some lepers had been able to mingle—perhaps surreptitiously, because they were not very much disfigured as yet—amongst the crowds and to approach quite near to Christ; these could not come near physically, but in spirit they touched Christ, for their urgent need and their firm belief in His Healing Power gave them absolute faith that He could heal them, if only He would. Christ at once recognised true faith. The peculiar circumstances of the men made it necessary to heal them at a distance. He did not, as in most cases, command them to come to Him that He might lay His Hands upon them, but He did ask something of the lepers to secure their co-operation and to prove their faith.

The Law of Moses had made provision for the official recognition of a cure of leprosy. The man

who thought he was cleansed had to go to a priest to be examined, he was then declared whole, and made certain ceremonial and symbolical offerings. We can imagine how this little band of stricken men had talked amongst themselves about this ritual for cleansing, and how they had longed to be able to comply with it. Now, suddenly, the Great Healer commanded them to carry out this programme. They were to act as though they were already healed, and in obedient faith, to make a journey to the priest. It was a real test of faith, and, for their salvation, they proved their faith by turning at once to obey. Naaman, the leper, disputed the commands of Elisha when he was told to wash himself in the river Jordan, but these ten lepers had a more childlike spirit than the Syrian noble, and a greater than Elisha had issued His orders. Those who are seeking Spiritual Healing would do well to meditate deeply upon this incident. There is a tendency among some to lay down conditions for their healing. They, so to speak, want to set the stage. Some will only seek healing through Holy Unction at the hands of a priest, refusing to recognise that God has bestowed the gift of healing upon the laity as well as upon the Church as a corporate body; whilst others will seek healing through prayer alone—their own and their friends' —and refuse, in face of the testimony of the Scriptures, the sacramental gift. Pride is a very common sin, and the enemy of souls uses it to attack very subtly those who are near to receiving a great spiritual gift.

The instant obedience of the lepers was at once rewarded. "As they went, they were healed." We can imagine the incredulous joy with which each man separately felt himself being made whole, and then saw that his fellows were healed too. Those with terrible illnesses know how much self-loathing adds to their sufferings, and what a mark it makes upon their subconscious self. The healing of their bodies was an unspeakable delight to these ten lepers, but in addition they were freed also from the great weight of depression and apprehension that had clouded their souls. They were free men, once more, and no longer loathsome outcasts. How natural it was for them to hurry still faster to the priest to receive their public recognition as whole men. Their natural instinct told them to do this, moreover the Great Healer had commanded them to do so. Nature and reason were on their side, but was there any other voice to be heard, any other line of conduct to be pursued? Yes there was. They had received a great benefit, and their instant response should have been heartfelt gratitude to their Benefactor. There was a higher law than that of mere literal obedience and self-interest—the outpouring of the thankfulness of the heart. "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." The response of grateful hearts was due to Christ, openly, and in the presence of all the bystanders.

One only of the ten lepers showed the grace of thankfulness. No doubt the others felt deeply grateful to Christ, but he only stayed to express

his gratitude. He turned round, and first of all, with a loud voice, gave thanks to God. He was still some distance from Christ and those who were with Him, but all could see what he was doing as he stood with his face turned up and his arms raised, giving thanks to God. He gave thus the first news that the miracle had been performed. Then, as the others hurried on, he came to Christ, no doubt running, and fell at His Feet, giving Him thanks. It was such an obvious thing to do, that even Christ, with His deep knowledge of human nature, was surprised that he only was there to give thanks. "Were not the ten cleansed?" He asked, "but where are the nine?" Moreover this man was not a Jew, but a Samaritan. He was a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel, but nearer by his love to the Heart of Christ than the nine good Jews who were hurrying to fulfil the requirements of the Law of Moses. His healing was more complete than theirs, for it affected his soul as well as his body. In him the Love of Christ circulated more freely. No doubt the Hand of Christ rested upon him in blessing, and deep in his soul he heard the words which none of the others did: "Arise, and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." This Samaritan was not only a receiver, but a giver. His response of gratitude had brought joy to the heart of Christ.

"We thank Thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,

. . . . .

Accept the gifts we offer
For all Thy love imparts,
And, what Thou most desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts."

Blind Bartimæus

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."—Ps. xxxiv. 6 (R.V.).

Read St. Mark x. 46–52; St. Luke xviii. 35–43.

THE restoring of sight to Blind Bartimæus was one of the last recorded miracles of Our Lord. He was "going steadfastly up to Jerusalem," knowing quite well what lay before Him. In a very few days, His Blessed Hands, so quickly stretched out to do good, would be nailed back on the Cross—a symbol of the rejection by the Jews of the gift of love.

On a previous visit to Jerusalem to keep the Feast, Our Lord had gone up secretly, now He came openly. He was surrounded by a great multitude of disciples and admirers, and the thought of royalty was in the air. His friends from the north who had brooded over the idea of Christ's kingship, were more and more inclined towards it, and even Christ's chosen apostles, deaf to all teaching to the contrary, had so far accepted the idea of their Master's temporal sovereignty, as to squabble amongst themselves for precedence in the new kingdom.

In the midst of the procession Our Lord walked, far away in spirit from those who thronged around Him, yet never too preoccupied to hear a cry of distress from anyone who asked His help.

" The sun and every vassal star,
All space beyond the soar of angel wings,
Wait on His word; and yet He stays His ear
For every sigh a contrite suppliant brings.

. . . . .

He listens to the silent tear
For all the anthems of the boundless sky—
And shall our dreams of music bar our ear
To His soul-piercing voice for ever nigh ? "

The procession of pilgrims to Jerusalem had reached Jericho, that place full of historical memories to the Jews. It lay very low in the Jordan valley, and its warm climate had led Herod the Great to make it into a health resort for the winter. He had beautified the town with a palace and other buildings, and in Our Lord's day it was a populous place. As the unusually large procession passed through the town, it must have attracted a good deal of attention. The people of Jericho would soon find out the cause of the excitement. Jesus of Nazareth, the great Teacher and Healer from Galilee was there. He was of the royal tribe of David, and there was no saying what might be the upshot of this visit to Jerusalem. The excitement grew, and the numbers in the procession would increase as the Jericho pilgrims joined in, partly to go up to the Feast, partly to have a share in whatever political excitement took place.

At one of the gates of Jericho there was sitting a blind man called Bartimæus. No doubt he was at his customary pitch assigned to him by arrangement with the other beggars. He had come there as usual to ask alms from the passers-by, little thinking of the great things that were to happen to him. Spiritual crises often take place in this way. Souls come to a "Day of the Lord" with great suddenness. When they expect great spiritual happenings in answer to earnest expectation and careful preparation, they are disappointed, but, on a "day when they are not aware," with extraordinary suddenness, a remarkable spiritual experience may come to them.

As Bartimæus sat by the gate, with the unusually quick hearing of the blind, he heard the sound of a great multitude passing by, and asked what was the cause of the excitement. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. The name was familiar to Bartimæus. No doubt, through the freemasonry of beggars, news of the great Healer had reached him. In his solitude Bartimæus had meditated upon what he had heard. Jesus had restored sight to many, why should he, too, not receive his sight? Faith was apparently needed. By that Bartimæus understood a strong belief in the power of the Healer, and a persistent effort to reach Him. Bartimæus believed the reports that he had heard. Christ could restore his sight, and, given an opportunity, he determined to do his part. He would get to the Feet of the Healer, and would ask for help.

As soon as Bartimæus knew that the One he longed for was passing by, he seized his opportunity without a moment's delay, and began to cry out: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Apparently Christ was not yet abreast of him. He seems to have been in the middle of the procession, and those in front of Him, tired with the dust and heat of the low-lying Jordan valley, were impatient with the vociferous beggar, and angrily told him to be quiet. In spite of this, Bartimæus continued to call out, and more loudly still: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" The unsympathetic multitude were annoyed at the loud cries of Bartimæus, but Our Lord heard them with a different ear. He detected at once that there was a man in desperate need, and that his urgency was real faith. Christ by now had come opposite to Bartimæus, and He stood still and commanded that he should be brought to Him. The situation was now completely altered. The interest of the crowd was now centred upon Bartimæus. He was no longer a nuisance, but one on whom a great work would doubtless be done by Christ. Those immediately round Our Lord, His apostles and faithful disciples, no doubt felt more kindly still to Bartimæus. They had seen many mighty works of healing performed, and were gradually becoming transformed by the spirit of love that radiated out from their Master. "Be of good cheer!" they cried, "rise, He calleth thee." God grant that this may soon be the attitude of the Church throughout the world in encouraging

the sick to come to Our Lord for healing. The Church should be in such close touch and harmony with her Master, that she should hear His continuous invitation—now, as in the days when He was on earth—to the sick who have faith to come to Him for healing. It is not for the Church to force Spiritual Healing upon those who are unwilling or unprepared for it, but to lay no obstacle in the way of the sick who ardently long for the healing of Christ in His Church.

Bartimæus lost no time in answering the invitation. The kindliness of those around was, no doubt, soothing, but his whole attention was upon the great Healer. Casting away his outer garment, careless of what happened to that cherished possession, he sprang up, and, guided by friendly hands, came to Jesus. Vigour and earnestness had been characteristic of Bartimæus all through. There was nothing of the beggar's whine about his words, but in speech and action he was direct and forceful. Now he stood close to Christ, his face turned in the right direction by the sound of Christ's Voice. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" were the words that he heard, and Bartimæus, using a term of deepest respect, the very same that Mary Magdalene used when she knew her Risen Lord in the Garden, answered: "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight!" Immediately came the decisive answer: "Receive thy sight!" Then followed the words of commendation: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Bartimæus had been clouded by no doubts or fears; his attitude towards

his Healer had been absolutely right. His firm expectancy had made a channel through which the healing Power of Christ could pass to him. A transference of life took place. Life from the Source of all life was given back to the clouded eyes of the blind beggar.

"Go thy way," was the instruction given to Bartimæus. He knew no better way than to join in the procession of Christ. All the people gave praise to God, and Bartimæus joined in with them. No doubt he meant to make his thanksgiving in the Temple courts in Jerusalem and in what better company could he travel up there? Surely the garment that he had so impetuously thrown away was one of the first to be cast on the ground to make a carpet for Our Lord on Palm Sunday at His one earthly triumph, and no words would be more heartfelt than his among the shouts of the crowd: "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!"

Zacchæus

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, . . . On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel. . . . The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His Face to shine upon thee; and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His Countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."—NUMBERS vi. 22–26.

Read ST. LUKE xix. 1–10.

THIS is a miracle of soul healing. Zacchæus was outwardly very prosperous. He had a lucrative business and had profited by it, for he was rich; he was active in body and nimble in his wits, but, though he little suspected it, he needed the Healing of Christ just as much as his fellow-townsman, the beggar, Blind Bartimæus. He was "tied and bound" in his soul by the love of money, and when, through mere curiosity, he climbed up into the sycamore tree to get a good view of Christ, he little thought that by that view he would come to see life from a different standpoint altogether, and that he himself would be set free from a bondage that was ruining his soul.

The setting of this miracle has its distinctive character. Our Lord was on His last journey to Jerusalem. He knew that at last "His hour was come." There were to be no more alterations of plans or concealing of His movements; knowing well what lay before Him, He was "going steadfastly up to Jerusalem." The holy resolve of His Soul must have been specially noticeable outwardly, for His disciples seem at times on this last journey, to have shrunk from intruding upon Him. They followed Him, at a little distance, with awed wonder.

At this point in the progress, however, crowds were surrounding Our Lord. A great band of Galilean pilgrims may have recognised Him, and their numbers have been swelled by contingents from Jericho. The fame of the Prophet of Galilee was great along the Jordan valley. He had received baptism in the waters of that holy river; His great forerunner had proclaimed Him there; and, when persecuted at Jerusalem, He had crossed over the Jordan, and many new disciples had gathered round Him there and received baptism in His Name. Now, it seemed to people, that the tide had turned. The Great Teacher was no longer in hiding. He was going up to Jerusalem firmly and openly. Surely something wonderful was going to happen? Were their cherished hopes to be at last realised? Was He going to set up again the throne of David, and to rid the country of all foreign rulers? The crowds grew in numbers and excitement, and the air was electric.

Zacchæus, the rich publican of Jericho, was most anxious to see Christ. His presence as an unpatriotic Jew would scarcely have been welcomed by the crowd that surrounded Our Lord. Rich though he was, and influential in consequence to a certain extent, he was anathema to those who looked for a Messiah. Much as Zacchæus, gloating in his riches, might affect to scorn the opinions of his fellow-townsmen, still his social ostracism could not fail to tell upon him. The financial ability characteristic of his nation had led him to sacrifice his patriotism to the love of gain; the hope of the patriotic Jews was, according to best traditions of his nation, spiritual in its tendency, so that the root sin of Zacchæus was to set material gain before spiritual aspiration.

For all that, Zacchæus, like Herod, was interested in spiritual things. He was most anxious to set his eyes on the Prophet of Nazareth. His quick brain thought out a plan. He knew the way that Christ would pass, he would distance the crowds, and get a good look at Him from a sycamore tree. We can imagine his excitement as he waited; his complacency at having overcome difficulties, and his eager watching the crowd as it got nearer to him. Everything, he thought to himself, was working according to plan. The crowd reached the sycamore tree, and Zacchæus, holding the branches back to get a clear view, had only eyes for the Figure of Christ. Then came the unexpected—the working out of the plan otherwise than Zacchæus had thought.

Those who watch processions know the excitement of anticipation, the arrival of the chief personage, and the subsequent reaction when he has passed; but for Zacchæus that reaction never came. The passing glimpse of Christ for which he had schemed deepened into something far greater. The appeal of the heart of the little tax-gatherer expressed by his longing gaze, went straight to the Heart of Our Lord. Through all the noise and excitement of the crowds round Him, He detected the strong appeal from the heart of Zacchæus. "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said unto him: 'Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.'" The Face of Christ had worked a miracle. As Zacchæus gazed at Christ from a distance, he was drawn by the look upon His Face—the resolution; the unworldliness; and, above all, the love which was so plainly expressed there. That Face changed his mere inquisitive interest into a passion of longing to know Christ, and that strong yearning drew Christ to him. "Our opening and His entering are one thing."

The healing power of the Face of Christ is illimitable. It is through this power, expressed corporately in the Church and individually in Christians that much healing work has been done. The Face of Christ may be for condemnation, but It is also for healing. There is a well-known story of how St. Francis of Assisi called one of the brothers to walk with him through the town. They went and came back to the monastery without saying a word. The brother asked why, and was told that by

merely showing themselves they had preached a sermon. To some saints it is given to show very perfectly a Look of Christ to the world, and theirs is a healing power. Bede tells us that St. Cuthbert expressed such heavenly love and sympathy in his face that when he went to preach to the heathen in the north of England, "None presumed to hide their sins, but, confessing the most hidden secrets of their hearts, wiped off their guilt with worthy fruits of penitence." The Face of Christ, reflected, as in a mirror, by His servant, had healed their souls.

At once Zacchæus responded to the Look and to the words of Christ. He, the ostracised, was asked to give hospitality to One Who was a popular hero. He had the power to entertain lavishly, but few would accept his invitations; now hospitality was asked of him, and his whole being flowed out in response. The grudging, insulting murmurs of the crowd were nothing to Zacchæus. He scrambled down from his tree, and received Christ at his house with great joy. The appeal for service works miracles. There is a deep longing in the heart of man to serve. The young, especially, are full of zeal to do social service. It is for the Church to utilise this instinct.

The transformation of Zacchæus was complete when he had made his public statement of his intended restoration—it was an indirect confession of guilt. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught from any man, I restore fourfold." The rich

publican was impoverishing himself materially, but he was gaining incomparably in spiritual riches. His own soul—healed and free—was given back to him. Christ had wrought another miracle at Jericho. The Light of His Countenance had brought salvation to Zacchæus and to his whole household. The Good Shepherd had brought back a strayed sheep into the fold, for Zacchæus, too, was a son of Abraham, as much as the strictest Pharisee.

"We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people; that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ Our Lord."

St. Peter

"Though he fall, he shall not be cast away, for the Lord upholdeth him with His Hand."—Ps. xxxvi. 24.
"Who, through faith . . . from weakness were made strong."—Heb. xi. 33, 34.

Read St. Matt. xvi. 13–20.

THE greatest fact in St. Peter's life was that he came into contact with Our Blessed Lord, and that through that contact his soul was healed. Contrast the man who could write the 1st and 2nd Epistles of St. Peter with the lovable but very fallible apostle of the Gospels, and the difference is very striking. A weak man has been made strong, his love has been purified and deepened, and his erratic impulses have been transmuted into a strong current of spiritual influence. The only explanation of the change is that which St. Peter himself gives (cf. 1 St. Peter i. 9). He had persevered in faith in Christ, and so had received the salvation of his soul. So complete was the change that he speaks of himself as "begotten again."

St. Peter was one of those Jews who was spiritually ready to receive the teaching of Christ. He was

longing after spiritual enlightenment. He had received the teaching of St. John the Baptist, and had no doubt submitted to his baptism of repentance, but he still waited for the desire of his heart—the true Messiah Who should redeem Israel. Then came the eager summons of his brother, Andrew: "We have found the Messiah!" We can picture the haste with which St. Peter hurried to see the Great Teacher. At once he fell under His spell. Our Lord's Eyes looked His new disciple through and through and saw that in spite of his obvious frailties, there was something solid in him, and that on this foundation He could build. "Thou art Simon, the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas." The Great Physician had a weak constitution to deal with, but He was confident of ultimate success.

From the very beginning of his discipleship, St. Peter was well to the fore amongst his fellow-disciples. His house at Capernaum became Our Lord's head-quarters there, his boat was at his Master's service whenever He needed it, and he became one of the three chosen apostles who were specially privileged to be with Our Lord at His Transfiguration. Together with the other apostles, St. Peter received teaching from Our Lord, and when specially commissioned, he, with them, both preached and worked miracles. Like many forceful people, he assumed, without being given, a leading position. He often thrust himself forward amongst the other apostles. His indignation with St. John and St. James who, through their mother, had sought chief places in Christ's Kingdom, is almost humorous,

if it were not for the tragic pathos of the spiritual blindness which it displays.

The soul of St. Peter in those early days was not unlike the character of the Lake on which he spent so much time. He was very full of life, was impetuous in word and action, and his talent for management shaded upon occasion into hardness and unlawful interference. He was liable, as was the Lake, to sudden storms, his words would then pour out without much pertinence, simply because he felt he must say something. When, for example, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he saw his Master in glory talking with Moses and Elias, St. Peter burst out with the suggestion of the three tabernacles "for he wist not what to answer." Then there were occasions when, like the Lake, the soul of St. Peter was calm and altogether irradiated by spiritual light. His flashes of spiritual insight showed his true value—the pure gold that was in him, undefiled by alloy. "Master, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!" All St. Peter's impetuosity was in these words, but they were divinely inspired. Surely "All men seek for Thee" was another of these golden sentences of St. Peter? He may not have been conscious of the depth of the saying, but he was inspired to state a profound truth. Greatest of all his inspired sayings was St. Peter's confession of Our Lord's Divinity. So deep was the spiritual significance of what he said that his insight seems almost to have surprised Our Lord Himself. The great apostle was truly inspired by God when he made

this declaration; he was absolutely unclouded in spirit for the moment, and very high was the commendation which he received. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in Heaven." Because he was spiritually capable of such illumination, Our Lord immediately revealed to St. Peter the great future which lay before him. He was to be one of the foundations of the Church. Together with the great prophets and with his fellow-apostles, St. Peter was to be a foundation-stone of the Holy City Jerusalem—the Church according to the heavenly pattern, which St. John, in vision, saw descending from Heaven to earth. The radiance of that city was "like unto a stone most precious," and the soul of St. Peter had to be cleansed by constant discipline until it shone like a "gem of purest ray serene."

Bit by bit St. Peter's weakness was shown to him. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" he cried in a strange paradox of humility, when he saw the miraculous draught of fishes. His self-abasement prepared him for the announcement of promotion: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." It was characteristic of St. Peter that immediately after his great confession he should have merited the sternest rebuke. "Get thee behind Me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." St. Peter's love of management, mingled undoubtedly with love for His Master, had emboldened him to rebuke Our Lord in foretelling His sufferings. "This

shall not happen unto Thee." Our Lord instantly detected in these words the craft of Satan who was using St. Peter to tempt His Master. As he was open to the highest spiritual influences, so St. Peter was also liable to suggestion from evil powers. A sudden storm of evil swept down upon him as a gust of wind upon the Lake of Galilee, suddenly agitating the still waters, and turning the light of his high spiritual illumination into darkness.

Then came the greatest strain upon St. Peter's faith, and his greatest collapse. When Our Lord went steadfastly up to Jerusalem, well knowing what lay before Him, St. Peter, with the other disciples, followed Him, awed, puzzled and sad. At the Last Supper, incredible as it may seem, he and the others reopened the question of precedence in the Kingdom which they still hoped to see set up on earth. It seemed as if he was almost wilfully deaf to the forewarnings of the Passion. Thoroughly characteristic of St. Peter was his urgent inquiry as to the traitor, his agonised question: "Lord, is it I?" and his shrinking from allowing Our Lord to humiliate Himself by washing his feet. St. Peter's sensitive, loving spirit felt the sadness which was weighing down His Master at the Supper. None of the apostles could fully grasp all the mysteries that were unfolded there, but St. Peter felt that there was a prospect of separation between himself and Christ, and his loving heart could not bear it. Neither in body nor spirit would he leave his Master. "With

Thee," he vehemently exclaimed, "I am ready to go both to prison and to death," and "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I!" The definite prophecy of his fall: "Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me" must have seemed to St. Peter a dark saying, not to be literally taken, but it sank into his subconscious mind and recurred, when the due occasion came, with great dynamic power.

Overborne with sleep, St. Peter and the other two disciples failed to keep spiritual touch with his Master in His Agony in the Garden. A special appeal was made to him: "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest thou not watch one hour?"—but the weariness of his body overmatched his spiritual strength. Only the power that came through prayer could have strengthened St. Peter and the others against the massed attack of the powers of evil when Christ was seized by His enemies. A clumsy stroke with the sword was all the help that St. Peter could offer in his Master's defence, before he, with the others, fled.

Recovering his courage a little, St. Peter followed Christ "afar off" to His first trial. "Afar off" he was in more senses than one. He had faith, but it was at a very low ebb, and only absolute nearness to the Source of all strength could have brought St. Peter with credit through the battle. He had then the chance of making good his offer and following his Master both to prison and to death, but he shrank back miserably. "I know not the Man,"

St. Peter declared, his courage failing him before a maid-servant. Short of deserting his Master in spirit as well as outwardly, St. Peter could have sunk no lower, but his "faith failed not," and in virtue of that he was able to recover.

"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That look was a healing look. It hurt unspeakably, but it began in St. Peter the "Godly sorrow that leadeth to repentance." All his miserable cowardice left him, he was only agonisingly conscious of his great sin, and he "went out and wept bitterly." He had failed in love and constancy; just where he had thought himself strong, he had been proved weak.

No details are given in the Gospels of the Easter appearance of Our Lord to His broken-hearted disciple, but we may reverently imagine the extreme self-abasement, the absolution which brought peace and strength, and the communion between St. Peter and his Risen Lord. We can imagine his reiterated "I love Thee," which perhaps accounts for St. Peter's grieved astonishment when, on the Lake side, three times over his love was questioned. "Lord," he burst out, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" Endued with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, the change in St. Peter became notorious. He preached boldly, wrought great miracles, defied the authority of the scribes and Pharisees, and acted as an apostle with firmness, wisdom and love. He confessed his Master openly before the world, and it was finally allowed him to make good his protestations at

the Last Supper. He followed his Master both to prison and to death.

> " . . . all himself, all joy and calm.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Then from his cross to spring forgiven,
> And follow Jesus out of sight."

St. Mary Magdalene

"He hath sent Me . . to proclaim liberty to the captives."—ISAIAH lxi. 1.

"Light is sprung up for the righteous, and joyful gladness for those that are true hearted."—Ps. xcvii. 11.

Read ST. MARK xvi. 1–8; ST. JOHN xxii. 1–18.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE was one of the little group of women who followed Our Lord and ministered to Him of their substance. Our Lord called Himself "the Friend of sinners," and Mary Magdalene had been a great sinner. She had once been possessed by seven devils, and Our Lord had cast them out and so brought her soul out of captivity. Many good Christian people in the West find a difficulty in believing in the fact of possession by evil spirits. They look on it as a mediæval notion that no longer holds its ground. Priests and missionaries, however, like the late Bishop of Zanzibar, who have worked in the East, find no difficulty in accepting literally the Gospel accounts of possession. They have had experience that in countries remote from Christian influences, the powers of darkness are strong, and that possession

is a very real fact. They know also that the Name of Christ, when used with strong faith, has power to cast out this evil. St. Mary Magdalene's release was complete and permanent. Like those on whom the power of exorcism is used, she literally "came to herself." The house of her soul was "swept and garnished," but it was not left empty, in peril of the return of the evil powers that had been expelled, for her Master,—"the Strong Man, fully armed,"—held it against all further attacks. Henceforth, "loving much," she followed Him like a captive in a triumph. Surely the song of her heart was: "Other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but of Thee only will we make mention."

It is a convention in painting to show St. Mary Magdalene continually mourning for her sins. It is artistically effective, no doubt, but is it correct? No doubt, and quite rightly, she had repented deeply, but, once healed and set free by Our Lord, surely she, like St. Paul, would continually strive to forget "those things that are behind," and to grow stronger and stronger in the new life into which she had entered? She was a captive of love. There is a sketch by Rossetti which shows this very beautifully. Mary Magdalene is seen—a tall, handsome woman, beautifully dressed—going straight, as if drawn by a magnet, to a house in which Our Lord is sitting. Various men are trying to attract her attention, but she takes no notice. Drawn by a blaze of light in the Eyes of Christ, she goes straight to Him. Love drew her, and Love healed her. Mary Magdalene was soon able to

express her love in action, for she joined the little band of women who followed Christ and His apostles, and ministered to them. No doubt this devotion met with special recognition, and Mary Magdalene with the other holy women, received teaching from their Lord which was not given to the disciples in general. The position of women in the early Christian Church was quite different from their position in the Jewish Church. In Christ, as St. Paul says, there was "neither male nor female," and Our Lord Himself by His private instruction prepared some of His women followers for their change of position under the new dispensation.

When Our Lord went up to Jerusalem to be crucified the women followed Him, wondering and awed, no doubt, as were the apostles themselves. Then to Mary Magdalene, with the others, there came the catastrophe of the Cross. She had doubtless, in spite of warnings, secretly hoped to see Christ triumph over His enemies, and take His seat upon the throne of David. Instead, she saw the apostles scattered, her Master given up to the hated conquerors of her people, and crucified like a common malefactor. The iron entered into her soul. Mary Magdalene was present throughout the closing scenes of Our Lord's life. Two of the Evangelists—St. Matthew and St. Mark—say that she stood afar off with the other women; St. John expressly mentions that she stood by the Cross. Perhaps the explanation of these varying statements is that Mary Magdalene at first stayed with the other women afar off, and afterwards, during the great darkness, came

to the foot of the Cross that she might at least be near Him Whom she could no longer see.

She was present at the Deposition, and no doubt helped to render the last offices. She certainly was present at the Burial, for St. Mark expressly records that both she and Mary, the mother of Joses, noted where the Sacred Body was laid. As soon as sunset ended the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other women got ready to do their last work of ministration to their Master. They went out and bought spices with which to anoint His Body. Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus had, it is true, put a great weight of spices with the linen cloths in which they had wrapped the Sacred Body, but these women determined to add their offering of love as well.

All through the night they sat up preparing their spices. Sad though their task was, it was a consolation to be able to express their love in some tangible way, and surely the rhythmic action of pounding and preparing the spices must have had a soothing effect upon their overwrought minds. The enforced rest of the Sabbath day gave much needed repose to their bodies. It is incredible that Christ, set free from His Body, should have been unmindful of His faithful, sorrowing servants. They were still joined to His Heart by the cords of love, and His healing peace—His latest gift to them—would already be operating in their souls, little though they might be conscious of it.

Very early on the great Easter Day, Mary Magdalene and the other women started out with their

ointment, before it was dawn. The darkness harmonised with her grief, but the gradual increase of light typified for her the rising of the Sun which was to illuminate her soul for ever. Her complete healing was very close at hand. First, however, there came more trouble. The Tomb was empty! Mary Magdalene saw the angels and heard their message, but she was too stupefied to take in their meaning. All she could realise was that the Blessed Body had been stolen, and that her offering of love could not be made. Afterwards, perhaps she remembered that Christ had foretold this, and that one woman alone had had the honour of anointing His Body in anticipation, but, just then in her grief, she could grasp one idea only, namely that the Body was gone.

The other women went away with their message, but Mary Magdalene stood rooted to the spot, weeping. Her desperate grief brought Christ to her. She could not have borne the full revelation of His Presence at first, so He mercifully appeared in another form which made her take Him for the gardener. He drew from her the cause of her tears, and very dear to His Heart must have been her impulsive and rather wild appeal to be told where the Body was that she might take It away. Equally unpractical was Mary Magdalene in starting for the Tomb knowing full well that it was blocked by a large stone which she and her companions could not roll away. Her love was supernatural in its quality, and supernatural was the response that it met.

The time for revelation had arrived. Her name, spoken as Christ only could speak it—full of love and remembrance—brought conviction and unspeakable comfort and healing to her soul. She fell down at His Feet and called Him Master, for He alone could command her utterly.

> "Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
> Who like thee His praise shall sing?"

On the Day of Pentecost Mary Magdalene was strengthened with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and who can doubt that she went out to do a great work for Christ to Whom she owed everything?

The Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt Thou refresh me."—Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

"Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole."—Ps. lxxx. 19.

Read St. Mark xvi 12–13; St. Luke xxiv. 13–35.

THIS is a miracle of healing not of the body, but of the soul. The suffering of a soul is far deeper than that of the body, and the cure is much harder. "A wounded spirit who shall bear?" Outward remedies have very little power in such cases. They may bring a certain amount of alleviation and distraction, but the only true remedy for a spiritual trouble is a spiritual remedy.

Consider the circumstances of this miracle. These two disciples were returning to their home at Emmaus on the evening of the first Easter Day. "The Lord had risen indeed," and yet that great Sunrise had not banished their night, for they were both of them in deep depression. They were disciples of Our Lord. Quite possibly, although they were not of the number of the twelve, they had

followed Him from the very first, having been baptised and prepared for His teaching by St. John the Baptist. They had seen Christ's miracles, and His teaching had been received into their hearts like seed falling into good ground. They, like all good Jews, looked for the Messiah, and what wonder, when they realised that Christ was He, that they hoped that He would vindicate His position by making Israel once more a free kingdom? Quite possibly, these two disciples had been amongst the seventy who had been sent before Christ, on one occasion, to preach and heal in villages where He Himself was coming. This wonderful experience as ambassadors for Christ must have been unforgettable, but they had yet to learn for what future work they were being trained. If the apostles, in spite of all the private instruction that they received, could still dream of an earthly throne for their Master, and temporal power for themselves, the disciples who belonged to the outer ring would be even more misled in their ideas about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then came the awful catastrophe of the Crucifixion. Their Lord, Who seemed to lead a charmed life, escaping time after time from His enemies, was captured and put to an ignoble death. He had seemed so powerful, and yet evil had triumphed over Him. All their long-cherished hopes for the redemption of Israel which they had looked to Him to fulfil, had been dashed to the ground. Disillusionment is very hard to bear, and the higher our hopes, the more we suffer when they are frustrated.

Another emotion besides disappointment was influencing those two disciples as they walked that spring evening from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They had been with the other disciples, all cowering together for sympathy and for fear of the Jews, when the women burst in with the news of the Resurrection. The women were jubilant and certain, but their audience, though startled, was doubtful and questioning. "Him they saw not." St. Thomas was not alone in his incredulity. "Women's tales," they argued, "must be taken with a grain of salt," etc., etc. And yet something of the joyful conviction of the women remained with these two disciples. It made a disturbing factor in their already troubled minds. It was something to be talked over as they walked home that night.

We can imagine how slowly they walked, for grief of mind makes us leaden-footed. Their conversation was monotonous and sad; both were full of gloom, and each intensified the grief of the other. They could not look up and exercise faith in the overruling Providence of God, and yet, all the while, help was close at hand. The loving Heart of Christ was conscious of the great need of these two disciples, and as they walked in the dark night of their sorrow, He drew near to bring them light.

"Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." The words bring back strongly to mind the night scene on the Lake of Galilee when the disciples were toiling in rowing, and Christ came to their help. "Jesus Himself," and yet their eyes were holden so that they knew Him not. How often is

this true in our own spiritual life. We desire earnestly to realise the Presence of Christ, and we pass through some long conflict in which we feel singularly alone, and yet, at the end we are shown that all through that trial Christ has been with us, although we knew it not. Such an experience happened to the great hermit, St. Anthony. He had been through a long period of wrestling against evil powers, at the end a ray of light fell upon him from Heaven, and the tempter fled. "Where wast Thou, Lord?" he cried. "Why didst Thou not appear at the beginning to deliver me?" "Anthony, I was here with you, but I waited to see your fight."

The two disciples were at first only conscious that an extraordinarily sympathetic stranger had joined them. There can be a great healing power in conversation, and with skilful tact the stranger drew from the two friends the cause of their sadness. His methods were psychologically sound, but He did more than merely draw them to unburden their minds, He poured in heavenly medicines which not only healed, but strengthened them to receive a joy which otherwise might have overwhelmed them. From telling the cause of their grief, the disciples went on to enlarge upon the hopes they had set upon Christ, and then they mentioned the inexplicable bit of news of the double report of the Resurrection, ending with the mournful: "But Him they saw not."

Enlightenment came to them gradually. They stopped their wearisome exchange of sad thoughts,

little though they knew it, they had laid their burdens down at the Feet of their Master; and they listened with rapt attention to the stranger's words. As ever, "His words were with power."

First He gently upbraided them—good Jews as they were—for not believing the words of the prophets when they foretold the sufferings of Christ. He appealed to more than their intellects, for the hearts of the two disciples began to glow as the wonderful exposition proceeded. "With the heart man believeth." Those who study the Scriptures do not need a Bergson to tell them that the emotions of a man play a more important part than his intellect. The hearts of these two disciples who had suffered so much were being revivified by the inflow of life and love from above, and soon the Great Physician would make them "every whit whole."

It must have been more than the customary hospitality of the East that made the two disciples press Christ to stay with them for the night. He had done so much for them since He had joined them on the way—sympathising with them, teaching them and healing their wounded spirits—that they must have come to love Him and feel loth to part with Him. "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent." Then came the wonderful supper. The Guest became the Host. They saw Him do what He had so often done before in their presence—take bread, bless it, break it, and give it to them to eat. As the familiar actions followed each other, their minds were carried from

the seen to the unseen, and with an ecstasy of joy, "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished from their sight." Is not this rapture a gift to be sought by all communicants? Ought we not to be brought nearer and nearer to Christ in "the Breaking of Bread," until our inner perception of Him as our Saviour and King becomes absolutely clear?

The healing of the disciples was now complete. They had been brought out of darkness into the full light of Easter Day. Once more they talked to each other, but in what a different strain! They compared notes, and found that their hearts had burned within them as they had learnt the true meaning of the prophecies about Christ. Words would fail them to describe their rapture at the realisation of the Presence of Christ at their table.

That supper was never finished. Full of joy, the disciples hurried back to Jerusalem, and broke in upon the other disciples with their amazing news. The utter change in their appearance, quite apart from their story, should have carried conviction, but still the others doubted, until the time came when Christ appeared to them also, and their doubts vanished in the peace of His Presence.

St. Thomas

"*Come and ye shall see.*"—St. John i. 39.

Read St. John xx. 24–29.

THE Gospel stories are a marvel of compression. They tell us so much in a short space, and yet how much more we wish they had told us. Their chief subject is the story of Christ's life on earth; incidentally they give us bits of information about some who came into contact with Him. Amongst those we naturally hear most about His closest disciples, the apostles. Some scene in Our Lord's life is described, and one or more of the apostles are shown as taking part in it; we glean some fact about them, and then they fall back into the partial obscurity of the background. Of some apostles we know no special facts at all, and yet they were all men of spiritual aptitude, and, with the sad exception of the traitor Judas, after they had passed through their time of probation, they all made "full proof of their ministry," and brought great honour to the Name of Christ.

St. Thomas was not, apparently, one of the chief apostles, but he was "called and faithful and chosen." He received, in common with the other apostles,

the special teaching of Christ which could not be given to the disciples in general; he, with the others, was endued with gifts of preaching and healing, and was sent out on the mission preparatory to the coming of Christ into villages and towns throughout Judæa; and on three occasions he was mentioned in a scene in Our Lord's life.

The first of these occasions was when the news came of the sickness of Lazarus. The opposition of the enemies of Christ had by this time become so marked that it was dangerous for Him to come near the capital. When He announced that He was going to Bethany, which lay only a short distance from Jerusalem, there seems to have been consternation among the apostles. In their excitable, Eastern way, they discussed the dangers of the move. Their Master was going into certain danger and to probable death, what should they do themselves? If opinions were divided, St. Thomas was conspicuous for his dogged courage and loyalty. "Let us also go," he is reported to have said, "that we may die with Him."

When Our Lord went up to Jerusalem for the last time, St. Thomas was with the other disciples who followed Him at a distance, filled with awe. During the Agony in the Garden, St. Thomas went to sleep with the rest. He was not called upon to keep vigil with the chosen three. When the soldiers came to arrest his Master, St. Thomas's natural courage forsook him; he was loyal and courageous to a point, but he, like the other apostles, was not spiritually strong enough to meet that great massed

attack of the powers of evil, and he forsook his Master and fled. The horror of the Crucifixion, the seeming failure of Our Lord, and the collapse of all his hopes of the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth must have overwhelmed St. Thomas, if he had not been sustained in spirit. His offer to suffer with Our Lord had been accepted. He had followed Him as a loyal soldier up to the great Battle in Jerusalem, and mystically he was to die with Him that he might rise with Him to a newer and fuller life.

> "Made like Him, like Him we rise,
> Ours the Cross, the grave, the skies."

When the Risen Lord appeared to His disciples in the upper room St. Thomas was not with them. The sequel shows that this was not a mere chance, for a great spiritual benefit was to come to him from that absence. As we advance more and more in the spiritual life we realise that no event happens by chance, however fortuitous it may seem. We find ourselves in places where we are able to help other people, or we unexpectedly meet someone through whom we get a benefit of spiritual and lasting value. Literally "all things work together for good to them that love God," however dark and incomprehensible they may seem at the time.

When St. Thomas came back to his friends he found them extraordinarily changed. He had left them full of sorrow and apprehension, he found them radiantly happy and peaceful. "We have seen the

Lord," was their amazing news. No doubt St. Thomas, in his incredulity, asked at once: "How did you know that it was He Himself?" He would be told in answer, of the sudden appearance; of the word of peace, which, like all the words of Christ, was with power, and brought peace; of the wonderful teaching about the Holy Ghost; and, finally, that the Sacred Body, though transformed, was still recognisable, that the marks of the Passion were there. St. Thomas must have longed to believe what the others believed. It was impossible for him. He was one with them outwardly, yet there was a separation in spirit. There was a spiritual disability in him—some coldness and hardness of heart—that prevented him from making an act of faith and rejoicing with the others in the fact of the Resurrection. He asked for definite ocular proof. "Except I shall see in His Hands the print of the nails," he cried, "and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His Side, I will not believe."

Was this the reason that St. Thomas was not present when Our Lord first appeared to the disciples collectively? Was he to give proof openly of a spiritual defect that needed the healing touch of his Lord? Such an evil had to be brought to the light and then removed. Christ knew that his failure to believe was not due to obstinacy, but to a real spiritual defect. Spiritual truths are not primarily apprehended through the mental or physical faculties, though both may be of the greatest use for corroboration. St. Thomas needed and was

to be given an increased spiritual vision which would lift him above an undue dependence upon both physical and mental proofs.

A week passed, and once more Our Lord appeared in the upper room. This time St. Thomas was with the other disciples. We can imagine what the week had been to him. He was despondent, whilst the others were confident and joyful. No argument could help him, even the argument of the change that had come over his fellows. They were in the light, he was in the dark; but relief was at hand for this faithful servant, this "plain, blunt man," who was infinitely precious to His Master. When Christ stood once more in the upper room, He again gave the blessing of peace, and at once turned to the one who most needed His help. With what amazement and shame St. Thomas must have heard Christ's words: "Reach hither thy finger, and see My Hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into My Side." Christ had met him on his own ground. He gave him the sign he had asked for, but that did not mean that He approved the test. "Come and ye shall see," had been Our Lord's words to His earliest disciples, now He drew St. Thomas very close to Him physically, but far more close spiritually. As the awe-struck disciple touched the Sacred Wounds, surely he was filled with contrite shame at his want of faith? Like an iceberg in the warm south seas, his hardness melted in the ocean of Christ's love, and he was healed by the enabling words: "Be not faithless, but believing." His answering words showed a faith not revealed by

flesh and blood; like St. Peter, he knew now the Divinity of his Master—"My Lord, and my God!"

St. Thomas was now fitted for the work to which he had been called. Endued on the day of Pentecost with the gift of the Holy Spirit, he went out to be a great missionary, drawing many to Christ by the contagion of his faith, winning for them the blessing of those who have not seen and yet have believed.

"Lord, there are many souls hungering for Thee, who as yet know Thee not. Oh, speak to their hearts and draw them unto Thee. Give them faith to launch out into the deep at Thy Word that they may find Thee and be found of Thee, to their endless comfort, and to the satisfying of Thy Loving Heart."

St. Paul

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; in paths that they knew not will I lead them."—
ISAIAH xlii. 16.

Read ACTS ix. 1–22.

THERE is nothing humdrum about Christianity. The unexpected is always happening through it. The outside world may find the teaching of the Church very unattractive, and may point, quite justifiably, to the low level of average Christian attainment, but the inner circle of the Church—those whose faith is really dynamic—know that "the shout of a king" is amongst them, and that, at any moment, "the Living One" may raise the dead to life, and astonish the world by an inexplicable conversion. A Charles Foucault, for instance, may be caught away from a gay, immoral life to be a soldier of Jesus Christ and a hermit in North Africa; or a beautiful young girl, with all the allurements of social life in London, may give up everything to become Mother Cécile of a sisterhood in Grahamstown, to be crippled in health for life in saving a little Kaffir child from moral danger. There is a deadly monotony about the life of sin,

its paths are well-beaten, its wages are certain and punctually paid, but the service of Christ is full of glorious unexpectedness.

Think of St. Paul when he was known as Saul. The whole set of his being was in one direction; then the utterly unexpected happened. Christ stretched out His Hand and touched him, and "the wild beast"—to use his own metaphor—that was making havoc of the Church, was transformed into a chief shepherd of Christ's flock. All the circumstances of his wonderful conversion were ever present in St. Paul's mind, and he never shrank from telling them, not from any self-glorification, but because they brought honour to the Name of Jesus, Whose bondservant he delighted to call himself. The details of the story are few, but very vivid. As Saul, he belonged to the very straitest sect of the Pharisees—the "all for the Jews" party—and his attitude towards the less strict Jews and the Gentile world was that of the council of the Pharisees in Our Lord's day. He endorsed their arrogant saying: "This people which knoweth not the Law are accursed." Altogether, young Saul was the rising hope of his party; his elders must have eyed him with satisfaction, sure that when they were gone, Saul would carry on "the traditions" well.

Then came up the question of the infant Church. At first the Jews favoured it; they could not find much fault with a sect whose members were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God; but when the real nature of the Church began to be

made clear, when it was realised that the new wine could not possibly be kept in old bottles, the Pharisees declared war to the knife. They saw clearly that it was "thy life or my life," and a great persecution of the Church broke out. One immediate, and, from the Christian point of view, valuable result of this persecution, was that the Christians who had fled from Jerusalem carried the faith into other cities. Naturally Saul, so zealous for his party, was to the fore in the persecution of the Christians. His mind was well stored with Old Testament stories of the wholesale destruction of the enemies of the people of the Lord. He could not conceive any better piece of work just then than to harass the Christians as if they were the children of Amalek, and to put a stop as soon as possible to the absurd idea that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead, and was inspiring the Christians. With the ferocity of a wild beast, the young Saul acted as persecutor. He shut up Christians in prison, voted against them at their trials, and tried to inveigle them into blasphemy to secure their condemnation. Not content with his exertions in Jerusalem, he offered to stamp out the hated sect everywhere by following the Christians who had fled to other cities, and bringing them to trial. Could Saul have done more to approve himself a zealous Jew?

When the persecution at Jerusalem was fiercest, St. Stephen was martyred. Saul was very active in the matter. No doubt he was one of those who gnashed his teeth when the martyr, full of the Holy

Ghost, declared that his judges, in spite of all their boasts, had not kept the Law. When St. Stephen looked steadfastly up to Heaven and saw Christ standing in power and glory, almost certainly Saul was one of those who stopped his ears and cried out loudly, and helped to drag St. Stephen to his place of martyrdom. He was an official witness of the stoning, and no doubt made his report to the chief priests and Pharisees, feeling that he had done a good day's work.

With unabated zeal, Saul next offered to carry letters to the rulers of the synagogues in Damascus, urging them to search out the Christians, and to give them over to him that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. With an escort of men he started off, in anything but a judicial frame of mind, full of bigotry, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Little though he knew it, he was controlled in his plans for that journey by the Jesus Whom he so hated. He was like an ox, which, resist as it may, is forced to drag the plough across his master's field.

In telling the story of his conversion, St. Paul would connect it closely with the martyrdom of St. Stephen. There was, of course, a close connection in point of time, between the two events. To the day of his death, St. Paul was most deeply repentant for the part he had played in the persecution of the Church, and especially of St. Stephen. Subconsciously, the behaviour of the first martyr must have made a very deep impression upon him,

but was there not some closer connection still between the martyrdom of St. Stephen and the conversion of St. Paul? Is it not highly probable that when the Church's first martyr entered Heaven in triumph—his Master, as he had seen in spirit, rising to receive him—he was allowed to make request for whatever he chose? His thoughts were with the persecuted Church on earth, and what is more likely than that he asked for the souls of his persecutors? He bore no malice to them—his prayer for them made that certain—and as Christ brought a penitent with Him from the scene of His Death, might not St. Stephen ask that he, too, should be given the joy of bringing to God souls saved from the power of evil? Whether that be so or not, St. Stephen's martyrdom and the resulting spread of the persecution, sent Saul on the journey to Damascus, and to his conversion.

We know the details of that wonderful story so well. How, quite close to Damascus, a supernatural light suddenly shone down upon the little company, making them all fall to the ground. Out of the light came a voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The escort saw the light and heard the voice, Saul, only, saw a Figure. "Who art Thou, Lord?" he cried, and the answer confounded him. "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest!" The Christians were right, then. Jesus was alive, and He did inspire the Church, nay more, He *was* the Church. That little band of shivering Christians waiting fearfully for Saul's arrival in Damascus was so much one with their

Master, that, in persecuting them, Saul was persecuting Jesus Himself. The anguish of the moment was intense. The ground which had seemed so solid to Saul slipped away from under his feet, his hypnotised gaze upon the Law of Moses was broken, the whole current of his being changed its direction; he now gazed at Christ and knew that He was the supreme attraction of his life. There was no questioning, no twilight of belief or hesitation, at once he put himself at Christ's disposal; "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

There is a very dramatic moment when the oratorio *St. Paul* is given in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, on the saint's day. After St. Paul's trembling question, comes a short recitative of directions for going to Damascus and waiting, and then crashes out the thrilling anthem: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" The dramatic thrill is almost overpowering, but what must it have been to St. Paul when the Light of Christ flooded his soul? It brought such agony that it deprived him for a while of physical sight, yet he was spiritually healed by it. Old things passed away, and all things became new for him. Whereas he was blind, now he saw. The restoration of his physical sight by the laying-on of the hands of Ananias was surely the seal of the healing of his spirit.

The old obsession which had made him bigoted, restless and cruel was broken; now all his powers were set free and reinforced, and worked harmoniously in the service of Christ. His pride of position went absolutely and he delighted to rank

himself as a bondslave of Jesus Christ; his energy was directed into world-travel for the spread of the Church; his powers of expression were now used to formulate Christian doctrine; and though he still loved his nation, he had a far wider vision of the destiny of the people of God than when he made a fetich of the Law of Moses. Most striking proof of all that St. Paul was truly healed by Christ was that he drank so deeply of the spirit of love. He who had scorned all outside his immediate circle became Christlike in the breadth and depth of his sympathies. He could write to low-class Corinthians as a mother or tender nurse; he could lay bare his heart to his converts without the least shame, if only, in doing so, he could stablish them in the faith; and he could send a runaway slave back to his master with the message that he was St. Paul's own son, born to him in the spirit, and that he was his very heart.

The healing of St. Paul began with the gift of sight—first in spirit, then in body. From that time he became a contemplative. The eyes of his soul were fixed upon Jesus Christ, and he gradually became transformed into the likeness of his adored Master. This was the secret of his life as a Christian. It was literally true that he no longer lived, but that Christ lived in him.

"Christ, I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you."

St. Paul's greatest joy was to bring honour to the Name of Him Who had met him at the height

of his self-will, and had made him a captive of love; Who had brought him out of the midnight darkness of his error into the brightness of His marvellous Light.

"Oh come, oh come, Thou Dayspring bright!
Pour on our souls Thy healing Light;
Dispel the long night's lingering gloom,
And pierce the shadows of the tomb."

The Penitent Thief

"The Lord's Hand is not shortened that it cannot save."—ISAIAH lix. 1.

Read ST. LUKE xxiii. 32–43.

THE end of the earthly life of Our Lord had come. He was nailed to the Cross in the extremity of bodily pain. The Blessed Hands that were so quick to do good, and the Blessed Feet that had toiled along the dusty roads of Palestine on His Father's business, were now pierced through with nails, and fastened down unable to move—a visible expression of the final check which His enemies thought they had given to His work and teaching. "There, there, so would we have it!"

Outwardly, Our Blessed Lord seemed helpless and weak, yet never was He stronger to save. He was fighting the greatest battle that ever has been or can be fought against the massed powers of evil. He was breaking the power of sin for all time—past, present and future. In the derisive title written over Him was proclaimed a far deeper truth than His enemies knew. "Jesus," "the Saviour," "the Healer," was hanging there.

The physical sufferings of Our Blessed Lord made words difficult for Him. He spoke very little,

but the love in His Heart was unchanged, no suffering could check the flow of that Divine Love. He was absolutely One with The Father, and God is Love. In His earthly life Our Lord had expressed the Love of the Father in works of healing, so now, upon the Cross, He still healed. He did one more mighty work, one more miracle of healing.

The mocking voices of Christ's enemies rose up, inspired to awful malignity by the powers of evil. They taunted Him as man: "Himself He cannot save," as head of the people of God: "Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross!" and, in a climax of blasphemy, as God: "He trusteth on God, let Him deliver him now—for he said: 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified on either side of Christ were caught into that whirlpool of malignity. What else than instigation by the devil could explain their ferocity? Why should they "cast upon Him the name reproach." They were notoriously bad characters. Who would expect them to resent the claims of Christ?

One of the malefactors added his own contribution to the taunts. "Save thyself and us!" It was a horrible insinuation; it brought Christ down to the level of a mere wonder-worker who was seeking His own interests all the time. The suggestion was clearly devilish. So evil was it that the devil overreached himself. The other malefactor was driven into revolt against him and escaped his power. How did it come about? With deepest reverence, we may try to imagine what happened.

The penitent thief, after his outburst of taunts, would surely have lapsed into silence for a time. His own awful sufferings would absorb his attention. Speaking was difficult; in silence he would let his eyes rest upon the Face that was nearer to him than any other. He had been with Our Lord on the Via Dolorosa, he had heard His words of forgiveness to His enemies, when He was reviled he knew that no answering taunts had come from His lips, and the wonder of it all must have deepened in him as he watched the Blessed Face. Those who are in great extremity of suffering can only hold a few salient facts in their minds, all the rest becomes a blurred background. Gradually the penitent thief put two and two together. The behaviour of the man next him was wonderful, but still more wonderful was that Face, so majestic and peaceful for all Its suffering. Like Zacchæus, the publican, in his sycamore tree, so this poor thief was captured by the Face and whole Personality of Christ. His cross became to him a veritable "tree of healing." "The mere contemplation of Christ shall transform us into His Image." This man was very far from being a saint, but by his rapt contemplation of Christ, he started on the road to become one. Our Blessed Lord Who knew what was in man, saw in this man a capacity for a death-bed repentance, and rays from His Heart of Love were streaming towards the penitent, and were drawing him to his Saviour before his dazed outer consciousness was aware of what was happening. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

The change which was taking place in the soul of the penitent was manifested in his answer to his fellow-robber. He had joined him in his abuse of Christ, but when he went on with his devilish taunting, the penitent refused to go farther with him. He shook himself free from the snares of the devil. Bravely and honestly he became a witness for Christ. "Dost not thou even fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss." The innocence of Christ was plain to the penitent; following this light he was to be led out of all darkness.

The word "king" had been the keynote of the reproaches of Christ's enemies. A king must have a kingdom. As light streamed into the soul of the penitent thief, it dawned upon him that Christ was indeed a king, and that He had a kingdom. With all his soul he now addressed Our Lord. "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." The words were sheer madness in the ears of those who judged by outward appearances, but the man was spiritually illuminated. Like St. Peter, the man was highly blessed. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father." Was it that by special grace it was given to him to see Christ Transfigured,—"the King in His Beauty"?

"Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The answering words of Christ must have brought an amazing thrill of joy

to the man's heart. It is recorded that many of those whom Christ healed on earth longed to remain with Him, but few were allowed to do so. This penitent had made no such petition, he only humbly asked for some recognition in the kingdom of Christ, and yet the great boon was granted to him that he should accompany his Lord in Paradise. He was still to be allowed to contemplate that Blessed Face that was the light of his soul. Who can tell what healing work was done in the soul of that penitent by those gracious words of Our Lord? How hardness and cruelty must have melted away in the warmth of the Love of Christ. The man had fallen in love with the Crucified Christ, and as there is no limit to the transforming power of human love, how much greater are the triumphs of Divine Love? His bodily sufferings lasted as long as those of his fellow, but surely his spiritual exultation must have lifted him above them in a great measure? As earthly things became dimmer and dimmer to him, the words of Christ, "to-day," "with Me," "in Paradise," must have echoed in his heart like snatches of music, soothing him and giving him the "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Was the gain only on the side of the penitent thief? In all reverence, may we not say that Christ was a gainer, too? What an unutterable satisfaction it must have been to His Blessed Heart to give out love to one who was craving for it. To those who long to give it is the sharpest suffering to be unable to do so. Christ's enemies had done all that they

could to stop His healing work. Was it not a joy to show that "the Lord's Hand is not shortened?" that the malice of man could not prevent Him from reaching that desperate soul that turned to Him in its last hour? In the great spiritual battle that Christ was fighting against unseen hosts of darkness, the soul of the penitent was, as it were, a bit of ground seized from the enemy. Was not this a great encouragement to the great Captain of our Salvation—a presage that the whole field would soon be His?

How few could minister to Christ upon the Cross! His lovers and friends could only watch and suffer, and a Roman soldier nonchalantly gave Him to drink, but the penitent thief was able to bring great joy to the Heart of Christ, and so truly to relieve His pains. Many a martyr died with the word "Jesus" upon his lips. Surely this man did, too? He had done his best to witness to Christ, and was a martyr in will and heart.

When it was all over for him in this life, who can imagine the joy of the penitent? He met his Lord in Paradise, and saw Him in a glory that he had only dimly imaged here. When the gates of Hell went crashing before the victorious Leader, the penitent thief adorned His triumph. Is it fanciful to imagine that a special work was given to him? Christ descended into Hell to preach to those who had been imprisoned for long ages—souls in spiritual darkness, unable to rise to the light. Might it be that the penitent could do his work by testifying to the most hopeless there how

sinful he had been, and how, at his darkest hour, Christ had shined upon him and brought him into His Marvellous Light?

Spiritual Healing helps for death as well as for life. Often at the hour of a man's death, his soul is hindered by the results of past failings. There may be bitterness due to long failure, the melancholy of continuous depression, or timidity due to a life-long fear of death. These are not sins which repentance and absolution relieve, but they are real diseases which oppress and hurt the soul. The ministry of Spiritual Healing can heal these sicknesses, and set the soul free from what would hinder its progress in the next world. The prayer of faith brings the Healing Touch of Christ to all these distressed souls, so that when their eyes are opened in the next world, they see His Face and enter into His Peace, and are with Him in the joys of Paradise, as was the penitent thief.

THE END

Printed in GREAT BRITAIN *for* ROBERT SCOTT, *Publisher*, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. *by* PURNELL AND SONS, PAULTON AND LONDON

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
PALO ALTO

86319 226.7S
Home, G. H752

AUTHOR
He healed them all

TITLE

DATE LOANED | BORROWER'S NAME | DATE RETURNED

226.7 S
H752

86319